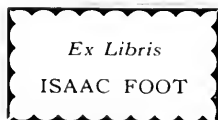
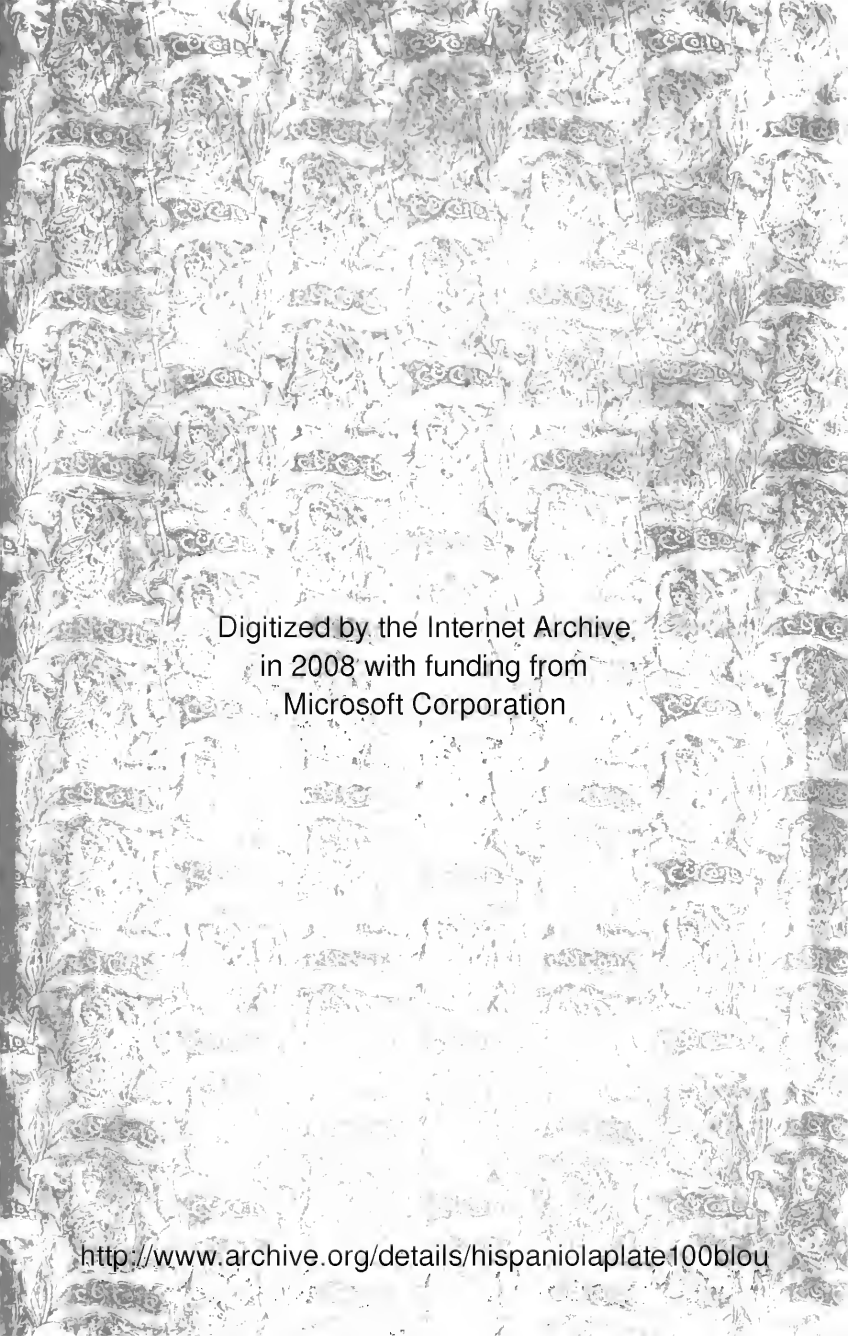




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THE HISPANIOLA PLATE

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

THE DESERT SHIP.

THE ADVENTURES OF VISCOUNT ANERLY.

A GENTLEMAN ADVENTURER.

HIS OWN ENEMY.

THE SILENT SHORE.

ETC. ETC.

C. E. Russell Rendle

The Hispaniola Plate

(1683—1893)

BY

JOHN BLOUNDELLE-BURTON

171

"We passed the tropics, as near as we could guess, just where the famous Sir William Phips fished up the silver from the Spanish Plate wreck."

DEFOE ("Colonel Jack").

CASSELL AND COMPANY, LIMITED

LONDON, PARIS & MELBOURNE

1895

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To those
OFFICERS OF THE ROYAL NAVY
WITH WHOM I HAVE, FOR SOME YEARS,
SPENT MANY PLEASANT WEEKS ANNUALLY DURING THE
NAVAL MANŒUVRES,
WHILE ACTING AS SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT OF
THE STANDARD,
I VENTURE TO INSCRIBE,
WITH GREAT CORDIALITY, THIS STORY—
PARTLY TRUE AND PARTLY FICTITIOUS—OF
CAPTAIN, SIR WILLIAM PHIPS, R.N.,
AND OF
LIEUTENANTS NICHOLAS AND REGINALD CRAFER, R.N.

PREFACE.

MOST of the maps of the West Indies published during the first half of the present century and anterior to that date mark distinctly the spot where the following story principally takes place. Thirty miles due north of Cape François, on the north coast of San Domingo, is a reef entitled "Bajo de la Plata, or Phips's Plate," while more modern maps simply describe it as "Silver Bank."

This is, of course, the spot where Sir William Phips—a now forgotten figure in history—obtained the plate mentioned by Defoe; and, so far as I am aware, there is but one detailed account in existence of how he found and secured that plate. This account is contained in a duodecimo volume entitled "*Pietas in Patriam*: the Life of Sir William Phips," published in London in 1697 anonymously, but guaranteed as accurate by several people who knew him. A production entitled "The Library of American Biography," edited by one Jared Sparks, also professes to give an accurate biography of Phips, but it is simply a garbled and mangled copy of the London publication. I should also mention that the "Biographia Britannica" refers to the expedition in the article on "Christopher Monk, second Duke of Albemarle." So does a work of the last century entitled "The Lives of the Admirals," by Lawrence Echard,

and so also do some encyclopædias; but all of them undoubtedly derive their information from "*Pietas in Patriam*."

This work I have myself carefully followed, because in it alone are to be found the descriptions of the "Frygate Algier Rose," her eighteen guns and ninety-five men, of the various mutinies, of Alderly's arrival on the scene, of the second voyage with the tender, and so forth. Indeed, beyond the requirements of fiction the account is absolutely an account of what happened until the chase after Alderly by Nicholas Crafer, when fiction itself becomes predominant. Alderly, I should add, was as real a character as Phips himself. So was the carpenter who discovered the second mutiny. The rest, with the exception of the Duke of Albemarle, are imaginary.

I may add, in conclusion, that "The Hispaniola Plate" appeared originally in *The St. James's Budget*.

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THE HISPANIOLA PLATE.



CHAPTER I.

NICHOLAS CRAFER'S STRANGE WILL.

“Gray's Inn Square, Oct. 20th, 1892.

“MY DEAR SIR,—In answer to your request, I beg to inform you that the terms by which you inherit ‘Phips House,’ at Strand-on-the-Green, from your late uncle, are as follows—the statement being taken from the last will and testament of your ancestor Nicholas Crafer, made in the year 1695:—

And I do hereby will and bequeathe that ye house called Phips by me, after my late captain and commander, Sir William Phips, when I purchased yt from Mr. Clitherow of Branford, do forever remaine in the possession of some descendant of mine, male or female, the former for choyce and preference, yet not also debarring, in fault of any bearing the name of Crafer existinge, those descending from the female side to succeed. That is to saye, it is to so remaine forever unless through it whoever doth succcede shall thereinto find the means whereby to obtain unto themselves a fortune of and equivalint unto the summe of Fiftie thousand guineas, the which I do hereby testify the meanes are forthcoming. After whych the house may be disposed of as best beseemeth those who have so found ye fortune. This, therefore, I say, “Seeke and ye shall find, knoecke and yt shall be opened unto you.”

“This will, in spite of its quaintness, has ever, and will probably always, hold good, although not law, until one thing occurs of two: either that the house falls down of old age (which it seemed very likely to do when I inspected it after your late uncle’s decease) or that some descendant of Commander Nicholas Crafer shall find the means of making the fortune of 50,000 guineas in or through it—a most unlikely thing to happen. For, as you know, many generations of Crafers have searched through the house from basement to garret, imagining that the original testator meant to hint that somewhere about it, was hidden away such a sum of money as he mentions; and always without result. Nor has the ingenuity of one generation after another ever been able to hit upon any hidden meaning which might be contained in the words of the will, or to find anything excepting the scrap of paper once discovered, of which you know; while certainly the land on which it stands—something under three acres—can hardly ever become of such value, or one-twentieth part of it.

“But as you know as much about your ancestor as I can possibly tell you, I need not write further, and I have only to state that, during your absence abroad, everything has been done to facilitate handing over the house to you on your return, and I now propose to prove your uncle’s will, and, after the usual formalities, to put you in possession of Phips House and other property left by him.—Yours faithfully,

“A. BENTHAM.”

This was the letter which Reginald Crafer read at his breakfast, one fine autumn morning, as he sat in that good old hostelry, "The George," at Portsmouth—a letter which he had found at the Naval Club after his early morning walk on the Battery—a walk taken with the view of aiding an already exceedingly good appetite, and of having a look at the waves dancing out at the Nab and sparkling in the bright October sunshine.

A better specimen of the young lieutenant of to-day than Reginald Crafer (with "N" after his name to show that he had taken up navigation as his branch) you might not see in any of her Majesty's ships. Tall, but not too tall for a sailor; close-shaven, as becometh the young naval officer of to-day, yet with excellent features that required nothing in the shape of whiskers or moustache to set them off; with clear grey eyes and a wholesome sunburnt skin—what more could a young man desire in the shape of personal gifts? Nay, what more pleasing a sight to gaze upon than this smart, good-looking young officer could the heart of a maiden desire?

Now Reginald Crafer—whom at this present moment you see eating buttered toast and a fried sole, as he reads his lawyer's letter—had just come home from the China Station in the *Ianthe* (twin-screw cruiser, first-class, armoured, 8,400 tons); and she having been paid off, the young man was on leave for the time being. He had slept at "The George" overnight for two reasons (ordinarily the naval officer rushes to London by the first train that will bear him, when once he has set foot on shore), one being

that he wanted to go to a ball at the Commander-in-Chief's to which the officers of the returned cruiser were mostly invited; the other, that he expected to find a letter from the solicitor, Mr. Bentham—which, as you have seen, he did find.

This letter was in reply to one that Reginald had sent to the lawyer from Hong Kong, which in its own turn had also been a reply. For to the young lieutenant there had come at the Station a letter from Mr. Bentham, stating that his uncle—also a Reginald Crafer—was dead, that he had left the younger Reginald a few thousand pounds (the principal part of his income having been derived from an annuity and a government pension) and “Phips House.” Then Reginald had written back for further details, had received the above-quoted answer at the Naval Club this morning, and—*voilà tout!*

Of course, he knew as much about the mysterious entailment of Phips House as the lawyer did; it would have been strange had he not done so. Eleven different Crafers had held possession of it since Nicholas departed this life in King William III.'s reign: eleven different Crafers, all of whom had sought high and low for the fortune it was supposed to contain, or for some clue as to how the fortune of “Fiftie thousand guineas” was to be obtained: and of those Crafers many had torn their hair in vexation, and others had stamped their feet and cursed and sworn—or, perhaps I had better say, grumbled and growled—at finding nothing. Of such irate descendants the last, the late lamented Reginald, had, however, not been one. Perhaps because he thought

that if his ten predecessors could find no fortune in the house, he was not likely to do so; or perhaps because he was himself very comfortably off with his annuity and his pension from a Government office, and his few thousands of invested money—which Lieutenant Crafer now came into—he bothered his head not at all about the chimera of the house at Strand-on-the-Green. Certainly he cursed not over it, neither did he swear—unless it was at the damp from the river!—and, being bald, he had no hair to tear; and he never tapped panels nor prodded walls nor looked for secret doors in the house, contenting himself with letting young “Reg” do all this when he came to stay with him. For the rest, and being a bachelor, he spent much time at his club; he took a faint interest in the curiosity which the legend of Phips House excited in the minds of his friends, as well as of the waterside loafers of Brentford, Kew, Mortlake, and all the immediate neighbourhood; he would even go so far as to invite people to stay with him and hunt about the house for themselves, when they were not enjoying the prospect from the windows of the market-gardens across the river. But of excitement in the legendary fortune, this bald-headed and comfortably situated ex-Civil Servant could get up not one jot; and when a burglar broke into the house, determined on finding, as he informed the barrister who defended him, “the blooming fortune if it was to be found,” he went to see him at Pentonville after his trial and told him he sincerely wished he had found it. Thus, to him, the fortune of Phips House was but an allegory or a myth, which he

regarded but as a grown-up child regards a fairy-tale; and so, unbelieving in all that pertained to it, he passed away to Kensal Green and Reginald the Second ruled in his stead.

But he, when he was a child—being of a romantic nature—did believe in the fortune of Nicholas Crafer; and when he was a man—being a sailor—had not lost all faith in the romance.

Whether that faith was justified, you who read on shall see.

CHAPTER II.

AN OLD BIT OF HISTORY.

WHO is he, especially of the London brood, who knows not Strand-on-the-Green? Who knows not that it lies below the choice and savoury town of Brentford and below Kew Bridge also, on the Middlesex shore; that it is composed of a long, straggling row of houses, many of them old and most of them quaint, which are of all shapes, sizes, and uses? One there is in which once dwelt Zoffany, the painter; hard by is a waterman's cottage, where the succulent winkle or shrimp may be purchased and eaten—the former with a pin supplied by the vendor; then comes a row of comfortable houses panelled and wainscotted within, then more tiny shops (with, interspersed all along the row, the genial public-house); then more private houses; and so on to Phips House—old, quaint, gabled, and mullioned, panelled also, and wainscotted. In it are fireplaces in the corners of the rooms—sure proofs of the early Charles II. period; it has also carved wooden doors and carved balustrades and banisters; there are balconies to the front windows having bulging rails to fit the hoops of women belonging to long-forgotten days; and all about it is that genuine look of latter Stuart times which may still be found in very many houses in this locality.

"What did it appear like when Nicholas first bought it?" mused Reginald Crafer to himself a few evenings later than the day he breakfasted at "The George." "Even if it hasn't altered, its surroundings have." Then he turned his eyes around and went on, gazing down the river meanwhile. "The 'White Hart' at Mortlake was there, I think—I have read of Jacobites taking boat from its steps; and so was the Duke of Devonshire's and old Chiswick beyond, with wicked Barbara Villiers standing at the window of her house and shrieking for the return of her lost youth and beauty. But not much else! No main drainage then, no horrible gasworks, no District Railway bridges! It must have changed a good deal since Nicholas hid his fabulous fortune, or the story of it, in the house—if it is fabulous."

He put the key into the door and entered, musing still.

"I wonder what Nicholas did to pass his time? There was no 'Packet Hotel,' no 'Indian Queen,' no 'Star and Garter' then." These places are, it should be told, hostelries of more modern date. "There was not much for him to do to amuse himself," he went on. "He was too late to know Kinde Kit of Kingston, who lived here; too early for the Georgian revels at Kew. Yet he might have often seen William of Orange (it was hard by here they attempted to assassinate him); he might have smoked and drunk at the 'Three Pidgeons,' at Brentford, and known the daughter of Shakespeare's brother-actor Lowin, who kept the place. Who knows?"

This young man, you see, was well acquainted with

the history of the neighbourhood in which stood the house he had now inherited. It was not remarkable that he should be so. From his earliest childhood his fancy had been strongly taken by all the gossip connected with the property that must some day be his if his uncle remained unmarried, and never did he by haphazard see the names of Brentford, Kew, or Strand-on-the-Green printed but he studied every word in connection with them. Thus, he was neither erudite nor pedantic, but only very interested in all that concerned the spot, and, therefore, very well informed about it.

What he did not know was—in common with his forerunners—much about the mysterious Nicholas Crafer, who had contrived, by arousing the curiosity of his descendants through the medium of his strange will, to keep his memory very green. And not only the curiosity of his descendants, but also of most people brought into the slightest connection with the spot. The waterside hands, the barge-loaders and the lookers after private skiffs and gigs, the keepers of local refreshment-houses, whether “publics” or those chaste bowers which have upon their fronts the mystic legends, “Tea and hot water 9d.” (how can there be tea-drinking without hot water?); even the hands of the steamers passing up and down—of the *Cardinal Wolsey* for Hampton Court (which place it reacheth not without arduous struggles and terrible delay), and the captains of the *Bridegroom* and the *Wedding Ring* (graceful names well suited to riparian jaunts!)—all knew the legend of Phips House as well as its new owner. So, too, did the

dwellers on Kew Green, the respectable City men who resided on the Kew Gardens estate and were on familiar terms with the parson, and the City clerks who abode in great numbers in modern Gunnersbury and modern Chiswick. All knew, I say, the legend of Phips House; all had heard of Nicholas Crafer, who was considered to have been a pirate and buccaneer; all—watermen, City men, and City clerks—were proud of their local history of Nicholas and their—in a way—connection with him.

What was, however, really known of him by the family—reduced now to Reginald alone—what had filtered through the eleven generations with regard to him, was no more than this: He had been an officer in the navy of the Commonwealth, being but a lad at that time, and serving under Blake during its last two years of existence; then under Charles II. in the royal navy; and then under James II., in whose first year of misrule he retired. Many a fight did he engage in in those days, as was well known to his descendants: he was in the destruction of the Spanish ships at Santa Cruz in 1657, and at the defeat of Van Wassenaer by James, Duke of York, in 1665, in the “four days’ fight” in 1666, and he assisted in the capture of the *Golden Horse* corsair in 1681, and many other valiant deeds besides.

Yet were none of these martial feats so romantic as one other thing he did, or, rather two other things. He accompanied Sir William Phips, then plain Captain Phips, in both his expeditions for the fishing up of the Hispaniola Plate—the second attempt proving successful. Now, as not all the world knows,

but as his descendants of course knew, 'twas in the *Algier Rose* that Phips made his first attempt to get this plate in the reign of that most high and puissant prince, King Charles II., of ever-gracious memory. 'Twas that great monarch who put at his disposal the *Algier Rose*, after listening to Phips's tale in the embrasure of a window at Whitehall—what time he was playing with the silky ears of a spaniel on his knee and leering at a young country lady fresh come to Court—a tale narrating how the Spanish plate ship, or carrack, was sunk off Hispaniola—or, as we now call it, San Domingo and Hayti; and how he, Phips, felt sure he could fish it up. But Phips came back without the plate, and the august Charles, being dead, could help him no more, nor would the saintly James, his successor, do so.

Phips was therefore now on what he would, perhaps, have called his “beam-ends,” and so were some of his officers, including Nicholas Crafer; and on them he would doubtless have remained had not his good fortune thrown in his way at this moment a friendly patron. This was none other than Christopher Monk, second Duke of Albemarle, a nobleman who loved much the bottle—which fondness led to his death shortly afterwards, when Governor of Jamaica—and who also took great interest in stories of buried treasure, and listened to tales of such things with eagerness. To him, therefore, Phips opened up the subject of the Spanish plate. He swore that though he had failed once in finding it he would never fail again; and he so much impressed his drunken Grace with his energy and sincerity that, at last, he sailed

once more for the West Indies as captain of a private ship commissioned to hunt for the plate, and with him Nicholas sailed too as second officer. Much money had been advanced for the quest; Albemarle taking six shares, while three were allotted to Phips, one to Nicholas, and one between the other officers, and the remainder amongst those adventurer-merchants who had assisted in finding the necessary capital.

All this is matter of history, which may be grubbed up by the student with little pains; so, too, is the fact that Phips did come back with the plate, having gone through some considerable dangers and hardships to secure it. Then the saintly King, James—who took a tenth as his royalty for granting the patent—was advised to seize all the plate on the ground that “one half of what had been in the Spanish carrack was missing,” and that, consequently, Phips had secreted that half somewhere for his future use. But the King, contrary to what might have been expected of him, refused to believe such to be the case—perhaps because he had been a sailor himself once, and a good one, too!—and, instead, ordered the money to be divided and apportioned as had been at first arranged, and also, at the request of the graceless but goodhearted Duke, knighted the captain, making him thereby Sir William Phips.

So Albemarle got his six shares, Phips got his three, and Nicholas his one: but as to how much each got considerable doubt has ever existed, since some historians say the plate realised only £90,000, and some say £300,000; though it was thought that

Phips got £16,000. But whatever it was it was sufficient to assist the Duke in ruling royally over his colony (for a year, when the bottle finished him!), to support Phips until the time came when he was made Governor of New England, and to enable Nicholas to buy his house at Strand-on-the-Green.

But than this no more was known, except that Nicholas lived some years after the making of his will, since he did not die until 1701, when the small-pox carried him off. And of what he did in those years neither was anything more known, nor of how he and Phips really got the treasure, what adventures they went through, or what hardships they then endured.

Yet, as will now be seen, the time was at last at hand when Reginald Crafer the second, twelfth in descent from Nicholas, the so-called pirate and buccaneer, was to find out all that there was to be discovered about him. He was soon to learn the reason of Nicholas's strange will and testament.

CHAPTER III.

THE VANISHED MR. WARGRAVE.

Now, in the letter of Mr. Bentham, the lawyer, to the present Reginald, mention was made of "a scrap of paper once found," of which the young man knew. And that he did so know of it was most certain, as all who came after the fourth Crafer in descent from Nicholas had known, for it was in the time of that fourth Crafer and in the first year of the reign of George III. that it had been discovered. Only, when it was discovered it told nothing, since on it were simply the words, "My friend Mr. Wargrave has the papers that will tell all.—NICHOLAS CRAFER."

Nothing could very well have been more disheartening than this; and I fear that the fourth Crafer in descent, whose Christian name was David, must, when he discovered that paper, have been one of the family who indulged in hair (or wig) tearings and in strong language. He was himself a doctor—for the eleven descendants of Nicholas had among them embraced all the professions and callings fit for gentlemen—having a fair practice in the neighbourhood of Brentford and Chiswick, and was consequently a stay-at-home man. And during his home-keeping life, while having a few alterations made to what was in those days called the saloon, or withdrawing room, he found the useless piece of paper. It was in the

leaves of a Wagener, always called by sailors a "Waggoner" (a book of charts, or *rou tier*, much used by old navigators), that the scrap was discovered pasted—between the cover and the title-page. The book itself was in a little wooden cupboard, not a foot square, that had always been evidently regarded as a secret receptacle and hiding-place, since over and in front of the cupboard-doors, which had an antique lock to them, the wainscoting was capable of removal. Yet, when last the wainscoting had been put over that cupboard, it was easy enough to perceive that the person who had so closed it up had intended it should not be opened again for some time, since the wood of the wainscot had been glued in some manner to the cupboard-door. Then, in the passage of time between Nicholas having closed up the cupboard and the epoch of David Crafer arriving, when the builder's man lighted on it—which was a period of over fifty-five years—some stamped hangings of floss and velvet had been placed over the wainscot by another owner; so that at last the little cupboard with its contents was entirely hidden away. That Nicholas could have ever intended his scrap of paper—if the information was really of any use in his own day, or in days near to his time—to be so lost, it was of course impossible to decide. Doubtless he never dreamt that the panels would be covered up by the hangings, and perhaps thought that, therefore, sooner or later, some curious eye would observe that there was a difference in their size where they enclosed the cupboard. However, whatever he thought or did not think, the builder in making his alterations had unearthed the paper.

Only, as David Crafer remarked, it was of no use to him now it was found and never would be; which was the truth, for when he in his turn went the way of those before him he had never so much as really and positively found out who Mr. Wargrave was.

Yet he had tried hard to do so in the time that was left him. Knowing his ancestor to have been a sailor, every record bearing on the sailors of the past fifty years was searched by him or those employed by him, but there was no Wargrave who had ever been heard of. The Admiralty officials of those days swore no Wargrave had ever served in the navy; whoever he was, they said, one thing was certain—he was not a King's officer. Then David Crafer got the idea that the man was, after all, a lawyer whom Nicholas confided in; but again he found himself at bay. The records of dead-and-gone lawyers, even when they had been famous, were scanty enough in the early days of last century; when they had not been famous—above all, when they were only attorneys—those records scarcely existed at all. So, at last, David Crafer gave up the law in despair. If there had ever been a Wargrave in that profession, he, at least, could find out nothing about him. Next, he tried the City, which was not a very large place in his own day, and had been smaller in the days of Nicholas. Yet it was difficult to glean any information of the City even in those times—especially since the information desired was nearer sixty than fifty years old. It is true there was, as far back as the period of Nicholas Crafer and the mysterious Wargrave, a London Directory (such useful volume having been first

published in 1677), yet in the copies which he could obtain a sight of—which was done with difficulty, since reference books were not preserved with much care in those times, and those which he did see were neither consecutive nor in a perfect condition—he found no mention of the name of Wargrave.

So time went on, David Crafer grew old and feeble, and had almost entirely desisted from the search for the name of Wargrave—the man himself must, of course, have been dead for some decades—and had long since come to the conclusion that he would never find out anything about him. Then, all at once, when visiting a friend in the City, and while turning over a volume in that friend's parlour, he lighted on the name and possibly the person. The book was entitled "A Compleat Guide to all Persons who have any Trade of Concern within the City of London and parts adjacent;" and peering into it in a half-interested, half-hopeless, and half-hearted manner, old David saw the name of "Samuel Wargrave, silversmith and dealer, Cornhill." Moreover, he saw that the book containing the name was published in 1701, the year when Nicholas died.

Therefore he thought he had found his man, or, at least, had found the chance of gleaning some information about him. But, alas! the year 1701 was a long way off the year 1760, when the paper was discovered in the little cupboard, and still longer off the year 1768, at which period David had now arrived. Moreover, David was, as has been said, grown old and feeble; "he did not know," he told himself that night as the coach took him back to Strand-on-the-Green,

“if he cared overmuch now to go a-hunting for a dead man, or even for the knowledge that dead man might have possessed of Nicholas Crafer’s treasure.”

Yet, old as he was, being now turned seventy, he took the trouble to make some inquiries. He had a son, an officer, away serving in the American colonies, himself no longer a very young man; if he could find something more to leave him than the money for which he had sold his practice and his little savings and the old house to live in, why it would be well to do so. So, once more, armed with the knowledge that Mr. Wargrave had been a silversmith in Cornhill, he began further inquiries—which resulted in nothing! At least in nothing very tangible, though they proved that the man who was in the “Compleat Guide” had once lived where he was stated to have done. The parish books to which David obtained access showed this; and they showed also that he must have been the tenant of the whole house—even though he let off part of it, as was likely enough—since he was rented at £133 per annum, a good sum in those days even for a City house; but they told nothing further. No one could be unearthed who remembered Wargrave the silversmith, no one who had ever heard of him. Nor did his business appear to have survived him, since, in the half-year following his last payment of rates and taxes, the next occupant of the house was a mercer, who in his turn was followed by a coffee-house keeper, who, in David’s own day—as he saw with his own eyes—was succeeded by a furniture dealer.

And then, as the old man reflected, this Mr.

Wargrave might not be, probably was not, the man who was Nicholas's friend.

At this period David Crafer died ; and ere his son, the officer in the American colonies, could be apprised of his death he too was dead, being shot through the heart in a skirmish with some Indians near Boston. Confirmation being received of his death, the property passed to another Crafer belonging to the elder branch, which was still existent in Hampshire ; and by the time he in his turn had passed away the finding of the scrap of paper in the Wagener, and the hunt for Mr. Wargrave, were almost forgotten, if not entirely so. In fact, as generation continued to succeed generation, not only did these incidents become forgotten but the whole thing became almost a legend or a fairy-tale. One inheritor even went so far as to scoff at the will of Nicholas, saying that he was a romantic old sea-dog who had taken this manner of keeping his memory before his descendants ; while, as you have seen, the late Reginald regarded the whole story with a pleasing indifference. But the present Reginald, who was himself of a romantic tendency, could by no means regard the story in anything but the light of truth, and, if he ever indulged in any hopes at all, they were more that the mystery might be cleared up in his time than that the fortune of £50,000 should come to him.

And it is because in his time the mystery was cleared up, that the whole story of what Nicholas Crafer did leave behind him "equivalent unto the summe of fiftie thousand guineas" can now be told.

CHAPTER IV.

CAZALET'S BANK.

Now this is the manner in which the mystery was at last cleared up in the time of Reginald Crafer, Lieutenant, R.N.

There was, and still is, in the neighbourhood that lies between Chancery Lane and Cheapside, an ancient banking establishment that is as old as the Bank of England itself—if not some years older—and that has, from its creation, been known as “Cazalet’s.” Yet there has been no Cazalet in the firm for nigh upon a hundred years, but, instead, the partners—of whom there are now two—boast the ancient patronymic of Jones. These Joneses are descendants, on the female side, from the last Cazalet, and in this way have become possessed of the old business; and it was when their father—for they are brothers—died, at almost the same time that Reginald’s uncle passed out of existence, that a change took place, which led in a roundabout way to the writing of this narrative of “The Hispaniola Plate.”

Old Mr. Jones had, I say, been gathered to all the other Joneses who had gone before him, and the two young Messrs. Jones—one aged forty-five and the other thirty-nine—decided that his decease marked a period in the existence of Cazalet’s when a change ought to be made. That change was to take a shape,

however, in the first instance, which caused a vast number of the people who banked with them, as well as all their senior clerks—many of them nearly as old as the late Jones himself—to shake their heads and to wonder why that late Jones did not burst forth corporeally from his grave, or, at the very least, appear in the spirit, to forbid the desecration that was about to take place. For the old house was to be pulled down—ruthlessly sacrificed to the spirit of the times, and a bran-new one was to be built up in its place!

“Well,” said the ancient chief cashier—who had been there boy and man since 1843, and had grown old, and also tobacco-and-spirit-stained, during the evenings of a life spent in the service of Cazalet’s—when he received the first intimation of this terrible news, “if that’s going to happen it’s time I was off. Lor’ bless me! a new house! Well, then, they’ll require some new clerks. They don’t want a wreck like me in such a fine new modern building as they’re going to shove up.”

“Why, Mr. Creech,” said a much younger *employé* of Cazalet’s, a youth who came in airily every morning from Brixton, and was supposed to be the best lawn-tennis player in that suburb, “that’s just why you ought to remain; you’ll give the new show a fine old crusted air of respectability; you’re a relic, you are, of the good old days. They’ll never be able to do without you.”

But Mr. Creech only grunted, and, it being one o’clock in the day when this conversation took place, he lifted up the lid of his desk, took some sandwiches

out of a paper packet, and, applying his lips to a small flask, diffused a genial aroma of sherry-and-water around him. Yet, as he thus partook of his lunch, he wagged his head in a melancholy manner and thought how comfortable he had been for the best part of his life in the old, dingy, dirty-windowed house; it having been a standing rule of Cazalet's that the windows were never to be cleaned, and rumour had it that they had not been touched since the house was built.

That the firm "would never be able to do without him," as his cock-a-hoop junior had remarked, seemed, indeed, to be the case, and received exemplification there and then. For at that moment a bell rang in the inner sanctum where the brothers sat, and a moment afterwards the office-boy who had answered it told Mr. Creech that the "pardners wanted to see 'im;" whereon he gulped down a last drop of the sherry-and-water, wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, and went in to them, wondering "what was up now?"

"Sit down, Creech, sit down," said the "pardners" together, "we want to have a talk with you about the new house." Here Creech grunted. "Or rather," the elder one went on, "the old house;" whereon the cashier smiled, as much as to say that that was a far more congenial subject to him. Then Alfred, the elder brother, continued:

"You know more about this house, Creech, than anybody else." Creech gave a grunt again here, which tailed off into a sigh. "Why, bless my soul! you've been here five years longer than I've been in

existence—there's no one else knows as much about us as you do."

"I came here a boy of sixteen," said Creech, looking at the clock on the wall as though it was a kind of calendar of his career, "and I'm sixty-five now. That makes forty-nine years. Come Easter, I've been here fifty years. It's a long while!"

"It is a long while," said the younger partner, Henry. "But you're all right, you know, Creech. Cazalet's look after those who have served them long and well. When you feel like retirement and a pension, you say so. Only, I don't know how we shall get on without you. However, the retirement is a long way off yet, I hope. Let us talk about the present."

"What we want to know is this," said Alfred, "and you're the person to tell us. What is there stored away down in the vaults below the strong room? We haven't been down there for years; not since we were boys and our father used to let us go down sometimes. There seemed to be only an awful lot of mouldering rubbish, and it'll all have to be gone over and either destroyed or fetched up before the builders go to work on the foundations."

"So there is a lot of rubbish," replied Creech, "though I haven't been down there myself for over twenty years. The last time I was down was when the Prince o' Wales went to return thanks at St. Paul's. I remember it because I found a bottle of port wine on a ledge, and we drank his health as he went by. I told your father about it afterwards, and he said it must have been some of the Waterloo port his father had had given him."

"What else is there?"

"A lot of rubbish," repeated Creech. "There's several old boxes, most of them burst open, with leases, I should say, belonging to dead and gone customers of the bank, and a heap of broken old furniture that belonged upstairs when the family lived over the bank. I found a fine copper warming-pan, that Mr. Jones made me a present of; and I think there's an old spinet down there, and broken chairs and tables, and office stuff, and a basket full of broken glass and crockery, and that sort of thing."

"Humph!" said the elder brother. "Leases, eh? We ought to look into those. If they're ours we ought to preserve them, and if they belonged to customers who have left descendants, they should be returned. They may still be of the greatest value. Who can tell?"

"My wife," said the younger, "has been filling the new house at Egerton Gardens full of the most awful-looking gimcracks I ever saw. She'll want that spinet directly she hears of it, and if she could only find another warming-pan she'd hang it up in the bedroom passages as an ornament."

"*My* wife," said Creech, "warms the beds with ours in the winter. It's a very good one, but I'll send it back if Mrs. Jones wants to decorate her landing."

"No," said Jones Junior, "we'll say nothing about it. There's far too much rubbish in the house already. Suppose," to his brother, "we go down into the vaults and have a look round."

This was agreed to, so down they went, after

Creech had armed himself with a large paraffin candle and had rummaged out a bag full of keys of all sizes and shapes, while the elder Jones carried with him the more modern and bright keys that opened the safes and strong room. This latter they were, of course, in the habit of visiting every day, but the trap door leading to the vaults below—which was in the floor of the strong room—testified to the truth of Creech's assertion that it possibly had not been opened for twenty years. First of all, when the key was found, the lock was so rusty that it could not be turned until some oil had been brought, and then the door had stuck so that the two brothers—for Creech was no good at this work—could hardly pull it up. However, at last they got it open, and then they descended the stone steps one by one.

The place—as seen by the light of the candle—was, as the old cashier had described it, an *ollapodrida* of all kinds of lumber. The hamper of broken glass and crockery was there, so was the spinet, looking very antique and somewhat mouldy—a thing not to be wondered at, seeing that the Jones family had not lived over the bank during the present century. The broken chairs, stools, and tables were all piled in a corner—in another stood the boxes, some of them burst open, of which Creech had spoken. And around and about the vaults there pervaded the damp atmosphere which such places always have. The cashier had brought a second candle in his pocket, which he now lit, and by this additional light they saw all that there was to be seen.

"A lease of a farm in Yorkshire," said Alfred, taking up the first one that lay loose on the top of the first box, whose rusted padlock came off it, nails and all, as they touched the lid, "called Shrievalls, from the Earl of Despare to Antony Jones. Lor' bless me! Why, Shrievalls has been in our family for any amount of time, and I never heard of the Earl. I suppose we bought it afterwards. That's no use to anyone. What's this? A covenant of the Earl of Despare to pay an annuity to Ambrose Hawkins for the remainder of his life, made in the year 1743; that covenant has expired! That's no use to any one, either. A bundle of acceptances by Sir Marmaduke Flitch to Peter Jones—our great-grandfather. Flitch! Flitch! No knowledge of him either. An authority from Annabella Proctor to pay to her brother, so long as he holds his peace—humph!—ha!—well, that's an old family scandal—we needn't read that just now. Transfer of a lease from Mr. Stringer, son of Sir Thomas Stringer, a judge of the King's Bench, to Mr. Samuel Wargrave, late silversmith and jeweller, of Cornhill, now of Enfield, dated 1688. I suppose one or the other of them was a customer of the bank."

"Then it was Wargrave!" exclaimed Creech. "I've seen that name in some of our old books. At least, I think I have. Let me see—Wargrave. Where *have* I seen it? I know it somehow."

"It can't matter," said the younger Jones. "There has been no Wargrave on our books for a long while."

"A bundle of letters," went on the elder, taking them up, "from the lady Henrietta Belville to

Bartholomew Skelton, Esquire, at the University of Leyden, with one beginning, 'My dear and only love,—Since my 'usband is away to York'—Oh, dear! dear! we needn't read that now."

"I should think not," said the younger brother. "The Skelton family still banks with us. We had better send the letter back intact. Bankers should keep secrets as well as lawyers."

"Wargrave," mumbled Creech to himself, as he leaned against an antique office-stool minus a leg. "Wargrave! Where have I heard the name?"

"An account book with no name in it but a date. And written therein, 'On behalf of the Earl of Mar, his expedition. Humph! ha! well, we had a good many Jacobites among our old customers. What's this? A glove with a lot of tarnished silver fringe about it, a woman's—these are romantic finds!—a bunch of withered flowers, almost dust, and a little box——"

"That's it," exclaimed Creech, "a box with the name of Wargrave on it. "That's it!"

"On the contrary, Creech, there is nothing on it; but, inside, a paper with written on that, and badly spelt, too—'His hair. Cut from his head by a true friend after his death at the Battle of Clifton Moor.'"

"No, no," said Creech, "I don't mean that box. I mean there is a box somewhere in this vault—a small one, with the name of Wargrave on it."

"There are a good many boxes with names on them," said one of the brothers, glancing round; "and I doubt if any speak more pathetically of the

past than this one with its wisp of withered hair and its label."

But Creech was hunting about in the rubbish by now, and at last, exclaiming, "That's the one I mean," seized on a small iron box a foot square and brought it to where the partners and candles were.

"That," he said, as he plumped it down on the spinet, which emitted a rusty groan from its long-disused keys as he did so, "is the box I mean. I remember seeing it years and years ago. Look at what's written on it."

In faded ink, brownish red now instead of black, on paper a dirty slate colour instead of white, were the words:—

This box is to be given to any descendant or representative of Lieutenant Nicholas Crafer who is alive at my death. To be given at once after, but not before.—SAMUEL WARGRAVE.

Nota Bene.—I do believe it is very important.

January, 1769.

"And," exclaimed the younger brother, "being so very important it has lain here for over 180 years. We *have* been assiduous for our customers.'

"But why," said the elder brother, "when you saw it years ago, Creech, was nothing done? Why did not you, or my father, find out some Wargrave or some Crafer? There must be some left."

"Your father said he would make some inquiries; but I don't know whether he ever did or not. At any rate, it went clean out of my head. I was just off on my holidays, I remember, when I happened to see it; and, to tell you the truth, I never thought any more about it from that day to this. And I shouldn't

have done so now if it hadn't been for that transfer you read out a minute ago."

* * * * *

A fortnight later the box was in Reginald Crafer's possession, with an apology from Messrs. Cazalet and Co. for the long period in which it had lain unattended to in their hands. They had discovered him by a reference to the suburban directory, after a search through the London and also several county directories, and Mr. Bentham's name had been quite enough to assure Messrs. Cazalet and Co. that he was the rightful person to whom to entrust the box.

The lock—a most excellent one, considering when it was made—had to be burst open, for no key could be found to fit it, and then Reginald saw what were its contents. First, there was a piece of paper on which was written:—

I do feel so sure that Mr. Wargrave will carry out my instructions after my death that I leave this pretious legacy to him in all good faith, and to you my descendant to whom it may after come, with all my love and good wishes; and so I say, May what you find herein prosper you.

N. C.

Then, in a neat roll, tied up with black ribbon, was a vast number of sheets of paper covered with writing, some of it being very neat, some of it very ungainly, with many words scored out and others inserted, and also many misspelt, and some not spelt twice alike.

And Reginald Crafer, after an early meal, sat himself down to a perusal of those closely written sheets which had been at last unearthed after lying in the vaults of Cazalet's bank so long.

This is what they told him.

The History of
NICHOLAS CRAFER, Lieutenant,
and the Search for
THE HISPANIOLA PLATE,
with all that occurred during that search
and followed after it.
As told by him.

CHAPTER V.

CAPTAIN WILLIAM PHIPS.

THERE will be but little need that I ask pardon of him or her who receives this paper from Mr. Wargrave, since if he who does so shall have courage, or she who receives it have an honest friend to depend upon, they will have no reason to reproach me for what I have done. The finding of it will tell him or her how they shall become possessed of a fortune; and those who have gone before them and after me can never know how they have missed it. That it is not well for any Crafer to find this paper near unto my time is the reason why, with great care and pains, I have so bestowed it in my friend's hand, and, better is it that I shall have laid in grave a hundred years or more before it is discovered, than that any coming close to me should light upon it.

Now, you who so receive my writing shall understand the reason whereof I say this. Because it partly relateth to a large amount of plate, of jewels, of gold and coins, all of which did indeed belong to the Spanish Carrack which my commander, Phips, digged or rather fished up, from the bottom of the sea where it had lain forty-four years, or, as some did aver, fifty, and because it was the rightful property of him, of the Duke of Albemarle who had a share therein, of King James who had a tenth, and of

many others. For some of this money and valuables was all stolen by a thief who was ever a rogue in grain, and what is true enough is, that there was a many suspicions when the finders came back to London that one half of this treasure was missing. As indeed some was, tho' not stolen by him whom the accusers pointed at. For Phips, who was an honest-born New England boy—one of twenty-six children—who had been bred a shepherd and had then become a sailor, was indeed no thief, but ever an honest man, as James declared, who was himself none too honest. Yet, as I say, when the ship with the treasure came back to England, there was a cry that one half was missing, that Phips had left me and others behind to hide away that half, and that, indeed, we were all thieves—tho' we were none, or only one of us, and that was neither Phips nor I.

Now, if so be that the house which I called after my dear and honoured friend, and superior in rank tho' not in birth—for the Crafers have ever been gentlemen of repute and of good descent from an ancient family in Hampshire—be not burned down or falleth not down from age, and our line dieth not out, and the paper telling where these writings are be not doomed to be found by a stranger, then must a Crafer be the one to read them. And he will find strange matter in it who doth so read. For in the long winter evenings which are before me—since I have begun to write this narrative in the month of November, 1700, and trust to finish it with the incoming of the New Century—I do propose to tell you who may open the packet all that befel our

voyages to find the contents of the Hispaniola Plate Ship, which was sunken off "The Boylers," a reef of shoals a few leagues off of the island of Aiitti, as the natives call it; but known generally by its Spanish name of San Domingo.

And being but a poor penman I mean to divide my story into heads, thusly.

First, I mean to tell you of my acquaintance with Phips at the time he approached The King, I mean Charles; then of how he sailed in the *Algier Rose* for Hispaniola, and of two mutinies. Then, how, after four years, we again sailed in the Duke's ship, or *Furie*, and what happened to us in the fishing up of the plate. But more than all this is to tell you of shameful villainies and thievings that took place, and of how the chief villain was frustrated so that not he but another was to be benefited. And who, think you, my descendant whom I know not, is that other? You may think Phips, you might imagine myself or the Duke, you might suppose some of the other adventurers. Yet 'tis not so. 'Tis no less an one than *you—you, yourself*. That is if you have a manly heart, or, being a woman, a man to help you. For as I have writ—and if I repeat myself you must forgive me, for we sailors who fought battles almost weekly had but little enough time to study the art of writing; and you will find your reward by reading this—it is you who are to benefit. You are to have the fortune which the thief was possessed of, tho' not what he stole.

Therefore, having made this introduction, I proceed to tell my tale. And as I have, although a

sailor, been ever a Godfearing man, I pray that it shall be a Crafer who receives this from where I have disposed of it. For it was I who gained it all from him, and tho' I shall never see you who come after me, you may well suppose that I would sooner, far sooner, that the fortune came to one of my own flesh and blood than to one no way allied to me.

So I begin.

'Twas in the year of our Lord 1682, and during the visit of Prince George,* son of the Elector of Hanover, that I made the friendship of Phips, then Captain of a private ship hailing from Boston. I was ashore from the royal yacht that had brought the Prince over, and, insomuch as I now sought another ship, had gone into lodgings in Spring Gardens, both because of the freshness of the air over that of the city and its nearness to the Admiralty office. And it was at this latter, where there had creeped up again a good habit of the Admirals of meeting their officers frequently, that I encountered William Phips. A brave, topping gentleman he was, too,—for all he was a Puritan, tho', I think, ever in his mind a sailor first—then thirty-two years of age, fine and big and well dressed. Now, as a colonist and but a private sailor man, Phips was inferior to all of us who sailed for the King, yet he won soon upon us. He was brought in by Matthew Aylmer, then holding the rank of commander, though destined for much higher things, as I have lived to see; and soon we were told what his business was. This was no less than to get the

* Afterwards King George I. of England.—Ed.

King to give him a ship in which he had a mind to go treasure-hunting. Yet this was not a vision neither, for says he to us,

“Gentlemen, I know what I speak of and ’tis not foolishness. In Hispaniola—where I have been many a time—there is a place called Porto de la Plata. Surely some of you King’s officers have heard tell of it!”

Two or three amongst us nodded of our heads with assent at this, and he continued:—

“Well gentlemen, do you know why ’tis so termed? No? Then will I tell you. Forty-four, or as some say fifty years ago, there came ashore at that spot—which then had no name at all—a ship-wrecked crew in an open boat, in which there was no room for them to lie down, so stuffed full was it of plate.”

Here one or two of us laughed, and some seemed much aroused, while Phips continued:—

“They were saved from the great Spanish plate ship which had sunk some leagues out when striking on a reef, and what they brought with them was all that they could save. This was well known all over the island shortly afterwards, and is spoken of now, even unto this day.”

He had told this tale before to Aylmer, as afterwards I learned from him, and a few moments later he told it to the King, being taken over to him by his friend and introduced. Now, it is not for me to write down the grievous faults and failings of Charles—he is gone before his Judge!—but I will say this, that, with all his errors, he had a mind beyond the

common. Therefore he harkened unto Phips, and later on he called his brother James, whose faults were greater than his, but a good sailor, and asked him what he thought on't ?

James was at once all for it and hot upon the idea, for it seemed that it was not the first time he had heard of the sunken plate ship, and he was taken with Phips—as, indeed, were all who met with him. So, to make what would be a tedious story short, Phips received a commission from the King to go out in command of the *Algier Rose*, with orders to find the wreck and bring all away in her if he could. And it fell out to my great good fortune that I went too. To my good fortune as it came later, tho' not then, for it was not on this journey that we found the treasure, as you shall soon know.

Yet we hoped to find it, and so I was glad to go. It was in the "Dog" tavern at Westminster, where many naval men did, and still do, resort, that I got my appointment to the *Algier Rose*, Phips, who had taken a fancy to me, swearing that he would not sail without me. So there I made interest with several from the Admiralty, who would come to the "Dog" for half a pint of mulled sack, or a dram of brandy, and at last received my commission as first lieutenant to the frigate. A better ship never swam than she, carrying eighteen guns and ninety-five men, and when we took her out early in '83 I can tell you that the brave hearts on board of her were joyful.

In 1683 it was when we dropped down on the tide, with a lusty cheer or two from the King's ships lying in the river off Bugsby's Hole—for they

knew our intent—and another from the old man-of-war, the *Jerzy*, in which I had served as a young lieutenant; and so away out to sea with light canvas all in aloft, and just a single reef in our tops'ls, and off we went to find the great Hispaniola wreck.

And so I put down my pen awhile.

CHAPTER VI.

THE BEGINNING OF A MUTINY.

Now it happened that at the "Dog" tavern one day there came in, when we were sitting there, an astrologer, or geomancer, as 'tis called—namely, a caster of figures—who marking out Phips (perhaps because of his uncommon and striking appearance) seized upon him to tell his fortune, which he, having ever a mind turned towards fun, was well disposed enough to.

So the cheat, as I thought him to be—though found afterwards he spake true—catching holt upon Phips's hand, looked long and fixedly at it, after which he said that much money should be found by him.

"In very truth," called out Phips, while all around did laugh, "'tis that I go to seek, friend; nor, since every drawer in this tavern and ragamuffin 'twixt here and Charing Cross knows as much, art thou so wondrous a necromancer? Go to! your divinations are not worth a piece."

"Yet, stay," said the caster, speaking up boldly to him—"stay. What you go to seek you shall not find."

"Ha!" exclaimed Phips, looking at him. "Not find it?"

"Nay, not yet. At present you are thirty-two years of age; it wants five ere you shall get that you seek. Then shall you obtain your desires."

"'Tis well," exclaimed Phips, "and therefore must I stay the five years where I go, for find it I will. Yet, harkee, friend, put not such reports about in this neighbourhood, or I will slit thy nose for thee. I am a captain of a King's ship now"—as indeed he was, for his commission was made out—"and a good ship too. I want not to lose it through the chatter of any knave."

"Moreover," went on the geomancer, taking no more heed of what he said than tho' he had never spoken—"moreover, this is not all." And as he spake he pricked with a pin a number of little dots on the table, where the drink stood. "This is not all. You shall do more."

"Ay," exclaimed Phips, "I shall! Maybe I shall have thee whipped. Yet continue."

"You shall rule over a large country, though never a King, and you shall die"—

"Stop there," called out Phips, "and say no more. What thou hast promised is enough. As for my death, when it comes, it comes; that also is enough. Now go." And as he spake he picked out from a handful of elephant and other guineas, as well as some silver-pieces, a crown, and tossed it to the fellow, who, pouching it, went off.

Yet, afterwards, when we were well on the road to Hispaniola, Phips would talk with me on this astrologer, and would discuss much his promises. "For," said he, "there have been many such who have

told truths. My mother had a paper written down by one which worked out so truly year by year, that at last she flung it in the fire, saying she would no more of it. And a mighty marvellous thing it was! Year by year she bore my father a child for twenty-six years, and the astrologer's paper had so stated, as well as what the sex of the child should be, yearly. And also did it state that I—her ninth—should some day command a King's ship, which led to my always aspiring to do so; and as I now do the *Algier Rose*"—and he stamped on the poop-house where we stood, as though to confirm his words.

By this time it had arrived that we had passed thro' the Gulph Stream and were well on our way for Hispaniola, so that 'twas very hot. Sharks passed near us often, but gave us good heart, since never did they follow us. Portugee Admirals sailed by on the water, their pretty forms dotting the tranquil waves—'tis ever tranquil in these regions—like flowers, and the voyage was a good one. Of our crew also there was nought to complain, the ninety-five men who composed it being all sailors who well knew their work. 'Twould have been strange had they not known it! Many of them had been fighting the French and the Dutch for the length of their lifetimes; but 'specially had they fought the French, which seems to be what an Englishman is ordained for; and they had lived all those lifetimes on the sea. Yet, as you shall learn ere long, they were soon to give us much trouble, and, later, to give us more.

Now, as I have writ, and as, indeed, the Geomancer rightly forecast, it was not to be that the treasure

should be found by those who sailed in the *Algier Rose*. Therefore should I not have written down here this our first cruise in search of that treasure, had it not been that what happened on that voyage has much to do with what happened on the second one, when we did indeed find all. To do, that is to say, with the stealing of a great portion of the treasure by a thief, and how it came about that he could so steal it. But I wander from what should be a plain record, and will now proceed.

When once we were safe anchored in Balsamo Bay, which is near unto St. Jago, and not far from the reef called by us the "Boylers," but by the Spaniards and Portygees the "Bajo"—wanderers on the seas who have late been there tell me it is now called the Bajo de la Plata,—we set to work at once; but our efforts met with no success. Of divers we had procured two, one a Portygee mulatto, the other an African negro—the largest and most hideous brute in the form of man that I had ever set my eyes upon. Day by day we sent them down, and day by day they returned, swearing that they could find nothing of the Plate ship—no, not so much as a spar or a block. At first we thought they lied, as, indeed, we ever did, until at last the wreck was found, and then we knew they had spoken truth; for, having floated off, as we once thought, she was three cables—but you shall see.

Thus we worked, fishing ever and catching nothing, for two years, in which time we endured many hardships. To begin with, the Spaniards harrassed us much, in spite of our not having been at war with

them since '60, and endeavoured to drive us away from the neighbourhood of the Reef. But them we defied, and, on their sending out at last a bomb-ketch to attack us, we first of all spoke it fair, and, on that being no good, blew it out of the water; whereon we heard no more of them, perhaps because just now they were busy with the French, who had for the last six or seven years gotten holt of the part called Aiitti, and wanted the rest.

But now trouble bred amongst us, as, alas! it will do in any number or body of men who, after long seeking for a thing and finding it not, grow moody and heartsore.

For the men began to mutter between themselves and to say that we should never find the sunken ship, and that, since we had a fine frigate of our own, well armed and manned, why not put it to some purpose, and go pirating and buccaneering in the Southern Seas? The first to hear of this was the carpenter, a straightforward honest man of good grit; the last, of course, was the captain. But being myself forewarned by this man, whose name was Hanway, I soon went and spake to the captain, telling him what was going forward and below; and marvellous calm he was when he did hear it.

Being evening, he was sitting in his cabin under the poop, and, for coolness, had divested himself of his coat and waistcoat, and was refreshing of himself with a drink of rum sangaree. Then, when he had passed me over a glass and I had told my tale of what the carpenter had repeated to me, says he, mighty easy:—

"They wish me to go a-pirating in the Southern Seas, do they? And how do they mean to sound me, Crafer?"

"They are going to put it to you first," says I; "then, if you deny them, they mean to seize the ship."

"So, so," replied he, "that is their intention! Well, we will see. What are they at now?"

"Standing about the forepart and in the waist," said I, "talking to each other and doubtless concocting their precious schemes. What is best to be done?"

"Action," says he, "action, Crafer;" and he made for the cabin door that opened on to the quarter-deck.

But here I exclaimed, "What will you do? You have neither coat nor waistcoat, pistol nor hanger; will you go forth and beard mutineers in such a garb as this?"

"Ay! will I," he says, looking for all the world like a great lion—"Ay! will I. And you shall see. In half an hour there will be no mutineers in the *Algier Rose*."

And then, as I regarded his face—on which there was a dreadful look—and observed his great muscular form, I thought what a grand man he was and of what a good breed these New Englanders were. And a few minutes later I had reason for my opinion.

Now Phips had ever treated his men like brothers, never setting them to work he would not put his own hand to, never cursing or swearing at them as so many of the dandy captains and soldier captains—

who, good Lord! in those days were sent to command ships at sea—used to do; but ever kind and gentle to them, besides helping them with a turn at their labour. Therefore, as you may think, I was rightly astonished when, on our going on deck, his manner was all changed, so that the William Phips I knew was no longer to be perceived.

“Ho! there, you men,” says he, in a voice that neither I nor they had ever heard before; “ho, there, you skulking dogs, what are you doing forward? Come here, all on you, to the quarter-deck. Come here, I say.” And with that he stood in his shirt-sleeves, looking for them to come forward. Very startled, they did so; coming slow, however, so that Phips hurried them by bawling, “Faster, faster, damn you, or the bos’un shall hase you.” Which words from him made them all to look out of the tail of their eyes, but yet to come faster. So that, ere long, he had got half a dozen of ’em ranged up in front of him and a dozen more behind, looking on, moody and dark, as though afraid that whatever project they had formed was nipt in the bud.

“Now,” says he with another oath—which never did I expect to hear from him, a New England Puritan and ever a Godfearing man—“now, who’s captain of this King’s ship, the *Algier Rose*, eh? Speak out.”

“You are,” they muttered, surlily enough.

“Louder,” says he, “louder. You hain’t lost your voices, have you? You can make the devil’s own noise when you’re singing and bellowing your profane ballads in the fo’castle. Speak up!” with

still another oath. "Who's captain of this ship, I say?"

"You are," they answered louder, yet looking black enough.

"Very well," says he. "Now listen to me, you lubbers, and listen well."

CHAPTER VII.

THE ENDING OF IT.

"Now," he went on, "you're talking about mutiny, I hear, and pirating in the Southern Seas. Well, who's going to begin the mutiny, eh? Which of you? Let him come forward so that I can catch holt of him, and string him up to the fore-top-sail yard with my own hand. Come, which of you is it, to commence with?"

And again he glared terrible fierce at them.

Then says one of them—poor fool!—"We shall never find no plate here; what's the good, captain, of our stopping here?"

In a moment that man was upon his back with the blood pouring from his face, the captain having felled him like a butcher fells an ox, and "Fling him overboard to the sharks," says he. "Quick, or some more of you go, too. I'll have no mutineers here and no talk of the Southern Seas. Over with him, I say!"

But not one of them all moved.

"What," he roared, "it is a mutiny, then! Therefore, let's see the means to quell it. Crafer, call up all the officers. And now, you hounds, you who don't want to go to the Southern Seas, stand on the larboard side. Jump, skip, damn you! All who are on the starboard side when I have counted ten shall be treated as mutineers. Now."

Some did jump and skip in verity, hopping over to the larboard as quick as ever they could; for his wrath was awful to see; while for those who moved slower—though they, too, meant to go—the punishment was terrible. He sprung amongst them like a lion, as I have said; he struck and beat them with his fists, bruising and blackening of their faces; he kicked them like dogs, until every man who had come up to the quarter deck was over on to the larboard side—some of them bellowing with pain, some trying to staunch their bleeding wounds, some leaning over the bow muttering curses in their agony.

Meanwhile the officers had all come up.

“Over with them to the sharks,” he cried. “Over! Over! Send other men forward to help bind them and fling them forth. And this brute first,” said he, pointing to the man he had first knocked down.

“Mercy! Mercy!” they screamed now, while the other men forward, who were not disaffected, or, at least, had not shown their disaffection, came hurrying aft at the double whistles of the bo’sun and the bo’sun’s mate. “Mercy! Mercy! Kill us, but give us not to the sharks. Mercy!”

I whispered to him, “Surely you will not do this thing, sir?” and was eased by a glance from him and a word to the effect that he meant not to do so, yet to scare them, especially the first one, or leader, so that they should have had their bellies full of mutiny; and, meanwhile, the poor piteous wretches were howling and weeping, some calling on their God and some on their mothers, while all the while their comrades bound them tight.

"Now," says he, and at his words there went up a shriek more dreadful than before, "Now, fling over some jerked pork whereby the sharks may be attracted. 'Twill be a fitting prelude to a better meal."

Thereby they roared and roared again until, in very truth, I wonder the Spanish did not hear them on land—and "Over with the lines ready to lower those dogs," says he, "and, meantime, I will go and wash their filthy blood off my hands;" and away he went into his cabin. Then we who remained on deck saw to the pork being thrown over, what time I found opportunity of telling my officers that he might not yet carry out his dread sentence—and, presently, we saw the most horrid sight that any sailor is ever doomed to see. We perceived in the dim grey of the coming night that terrible heave of the water that the shark maketh, we saw the ripple caused by many fins, we even saw plain enough the evil, squinting, and upturned eyes looking for more prey. They had come for their suppers and wanted it—they wanted their victims; and the victims, gasping and sweating with fear, saw them as well as we did and knew their wants.

One fell down on deck and died with very fright all in his cords as he was bound, the others shuddered and shrieked again as Phips's voice was heard from the poop, and then he came forth once more.

"Are the sharks here?" he roared, "are they come?"

And as he spoke his eye lighted on him who had fallen dead, and he turned him over with his foot to see if he were truly so.

“A pretty mutineer,” then says he, “a pretty mutineer! Well, he is dead, so over with him—he assoils his Majesty’s deck; over with him.”

In a minute that dead body was cast over the bows and went splashing into the sea. Then we saw the waves all tumbled and tossed as though a sea-quake had taken place, or a whale had disturbed them in its passage; we saw the ripples made by the fins of the brute down there, and the silver glisten of those fins—we saw the water tinge from green to pale pink and then to red, until, at last, the dead man’s blood had overmastered the sea’s natural colour.

Meanwhile still the rebellious ones shouted and bawled; while some who were older cursed and blasphemed, another wept, and still another—the first one whom Phips had beat down—tried, all bound as he was, to rush at him and strike him with his manacled hands, or bite at him.

But now the captain paused, though ever with his eye on this fellow, and spake and said:

“Well, my hearts, how like you mutineering against the King’s Grace, eh? and against me who stand here for the King? ’Tis profitable, is it not—far more so than hunting for the plate-ship, with three good meals of jerked pork and drink into you every day? What say you?”

All but that mad and furious one shouted still for mercy—he standing apart glowering—and clasped their hands and said that, if he would but spare them, never more would they think of aught but their duty to the King and him—“only, only,” they wailed, “not the sharks, not the sharks!”

“ Well,” says he, at last, “ since you are but beaten hounds and know it, it shall not be the sharks this time—only, henceforth, beware! For if ever again one of you so much as mutter a word of disaffection, so surely shall your blood tinge the waters round as the blood of that mutineer tinges it now. You hear?”

They said they heard, and that there was no fear that ever would they offend more, no, not if the *Algier Rose* stayed there a century, so then Phips spake again, while ’twas noticed by us officers that never did he include the first man—whose name was Brooks—in his address, nor did he cast his eyes once towards him now.

“ So be it,” he said, “ and so it must be. For remember ever, ’tis not against me you offend and rebel, who am but a servant like yourselves, and was, a few short years ago, but a poor sailor also like yourselves; but against the King and the country, who, sending us here, believe and confide in us. Therefore, to mutiny is to commit treason, and for both of these the punishment is Death. But, since this is your first offending, I spare you death—yet must you be punished. Therefore, now listen. Until the frigate touches English waters once again, or until we strike soundings in the Channel, all of you rebels must take a double night-watch, at sea or anchor, and no drink must you have whatsoever, nor ever any leave. Are you content, or have you a better mind for the sharks?”

Poor, wretched fools! What could they say but that they were content—and so they were unbound and set free.

Then, turning to Brooks, and with those fierce and terrible eyes upon him, he continued—

“For you, you are but as a savage beast, and unrepentant. Therefore, I still mean to fling you to the sharks, or to, perhaps, maroon you. Yet will I decide nothing in haste; the sharks,” he said, very grim, “are always there, so, too, are many islands on which to cast you alone. I will take time to think how to punish you.”

Can it be conceived that this idiot and wretch, even at such a moment of peril as this, should be still so hardened as to defy Phips! Yet so he did. First he gnashed his teeth at the Captain, and then he swore a great oath that, were he free, he would kill him. And, though he muttered this under his lips, yet Phips heard him.

For a moment he paused, looking fixedly at him, then he called up some of the men who had retreated forward, and said:

“Lower him over to the sharks.” And all of us, officers and men, did shudder as we heard the order. “Only,” he went on, “since still am I merciful, remembering that I am naught but the servant of the King, lower him by degrees two feet at a time. Then, if by the period he has reached the water’s edge he sues not for pardon, let the sharks have him;” saying which he turned on his heel and entered again his cabin.

It was done, amidst the curses of Brooks and his fightings to be free. Longwise, he was lowered, face downwards, and, although twice the lines were lengthened so that, from being twelve feet above

the waters he was at last but eight, still only would he revile the King, the captain, and all.

"Thou fool," I called down to him, as, indeed did his shipmates, "recant, and sue for pardon." But still he would not, raving ever.

"Lower," I commanded to the men—"two feet more;" and by two feet so much nearer was he to the beasts below, who now began to disturb the water once again and cause it to heave, and to show their fins and hideous eyes. Still he would not and so, with another order, down he went to four feet from the surface. And now the water was all ruffled and bubbling as though boiling, or as 'tis when a child throws a cake to the trouts in a fishpond, and the eyes of the man looking down into the sea were looking into the eyes of the horrid things gazing up. Yet still, though he was now silent, he would not call for mercy.

The sweat was standing at this time on all our brows and, in very truth, our hearts were softened towards him—for if a villain he was a brave one—and almost did my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, for the time had come for a fresh order that would bring him to two feet. So I paused, hoping he would plead, yet he did not.

"Brooks," I called now, very low, for I wished to spare the man, and wanted not Phips to hear me. "Brooks, this is, indeed, your very last occasion. Will you yield?"

He answered not.

Then, as I was about, perforce, to do my duty, the water heaved and surged more than before, and,

leaping up from the sea as leaps the grayling from the pool to take the fly, there came two great monstrous sharks, their loathsome jaws extended so that the yellow teeth were quite visible, they evidently driven beyond endurance by the sight of the tempting bait so near. In that instant all shuddered and drew back, daring not to look below, the sweat poured out all over us now, and from the side there came a fearful, piercing scream of agony and the voice of Brooks calling, "In God's mercy draw me up, oh! draw me up. I am penitent. Pity! Pity!

The sharks in their frenzied leap had struck against each other and, instead of seizing their victim, had but hurled each other back into the sea, and thus he was spared. So we drew him up, and with this ended the first mutiny of the *Algier Rose*.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SECOND MUTINY.

AND now I commence again.

Two years more had passed, and still we had not found the plate.

Very disheartened were we all by now, you may be sure, perhaps the one who kept himself best being the captain, who still hearkened after the astrologer's prophecy. Yet this, while still he did so, he chided himself for, saying that it became not a Puritan of New England to believe in any such things.

"For," says he, "in my colony they are now burning witches and wizards, geomancers, astrologers, and those which pretend to be Cabala with the stars, to say nought of quack-salvers and saltin-bancoes, so that I am but a degenerate son. Yet not of my mother neither: for she, as I have told you, Nick"—as now he called me—"bought an astrologer's pricked paper and found it come true. Still, wrong as I do, I cannot but think the easter was right. Then, if so, must we wait another year; for by that time I shall have arrived at my thirty-seventh."

That he would have waited had not the King—but you shall hear.

We had now arrived, as I have said, at our fourth year out, and at this time Phips, who had one

moment, as I have also writ, the idea of staying until his thirty-seventh year, and at another the mind to take the frigate home and confess to the King that he had failed, decided to have the ship's bottom cleaned, or, as 'tis called, breamed. Therefore, for this purpose we moved her somewhat away from the "Boylers" to a little island, of which there is a multitude hereabout—for we would not go to the mainland for fear of a broil with the Spaniards—and there careened her.

Now, a sweet little isle this was as any one might wish to see—though very small, and on the charts tho' not the maps,—all covered over with a small forest in which grew the palm, the juniper, the caramite and acajou, as well as good fruits, such as limes, toronias, citrons, and lemons. Also, too, there were here good streams of fair fresh water all running about, at which one might stoop to lave themselves or to drink their fill. Ofttimes we had been over there before, especially to fetch in our boats the fresh water and the limes, for since our tubs of beer* had long since run dry this was our only beverage. Moreover, here we came in boats when we took our spells of leave, and, lying down in the little forest, would try to forget the tropic heat of where we had now been stationed so long, and would send our minds shooting back to memories of cool English lanes all shotted with the sweet May and the Eglantine, of our dear grey skies and our pleasant wealds.

* The drink of the Navy prior to the introduction of rum by Admiral Vernon.

But now we were come in the ship to work and not to take our ease, for breaining is, as sailors know, no lightsome task. Yet, too, there was a pleasant relaxation even in this, for, since the frigate was not liveable when careened over, all of us were bestowed ashore. So, too, were the remaining stores, of which in most things we still had a plenty, and so, too, were the great guns, they being placed around our encampment as though a fort. The ship herself was hove down by the side of a rock which stretched out from the land a little way; and, so that we could come at her and go to and fro with greater ease, we had constructed a bridge made of a plank leading from the summit of the rock to the shore, just above high water. 'Twas not long to the beginning of the rock from the land, being some thirty feet, but once on the rock itself one had to walk some hundred feet to reach where the frigate was.

Now Phips, as ever, setting a good example, had with his own great strong hands helped at hauling the ship over, and ashore he had assisted in cutting down trees to make our encampment palisadoes, our cabin roofs and wooden walls, and so forth. Never did he spare himself, and thus endeavoured to keep harmony and good will among all, officers and men alike.

As to the mutiny, 'twas now forgot, or at least we thought so. Brooks, who had been the ringleader in it, seemed quite broken since the episode with the sharks, and, perhaps, also a little with the treatment since accorded him. Never had the Captain relaxed on him—and but little on the others, tho' somewhat

—and never had he been permitted so much as an hour's leave or a sup of the beer while the casks lasted, or to take more than one watch and one dog watch below in the twenty-four hours. I say it broke him, yet I liked not the look to be seen sometimes on his face; and 'twas more than once that I bid the Captain observe him well, as also I did the subaltern officers. But Phips only laughed, saying:

“Tush, Nick! We have scotched the villain; have no fear; what can he do? Moreover, is not old Hanway a watch dog that never looses his eye from him? And, as he knows, his friends the sharks are ever near.”

So the memory of the mutiny slumbered or awakened but little, and time went on and the breaming of the ship was a'most finished. We got her clean at last, by a plentiful kindling of furze and oil and faggots, so as to melt the old pitch about her, and were rapidly getting her re-pitched and caulked, coated and stuffed, so that when we went back to fish for another year she would be so clean and neat that, when we upped anchor, we should be ready for home at once. Also we had righted the ship again so that some few could live in her, and soon we meant to bring back the stores, great guns and other things.

But now we were to learn over what a masked mine we had been slumbering, and we were to see once more how the hand of Providence was always guarding us, as, I thank God, it has ever done where I have been concerned.

There were seven of us in the frigate one most

glorious Sunday afternoon—namely, the Captain and myself and five men, when, sitting on the poop under an awning, he and I saw Hanway being supported between two others from the little wood to the plank that reached the shore. The man seemed sick enough by the way he dragged himself along between those two, and we, wondering what ailed him, went up on to the rock and so on to the hither side of the plank, and the Captain hailed to know what was the mischief with him?

“Sir,” calls back a sailor, one of those leading him, “he is took very ill with a colic and wishes to go aboard to get a dram and rest. Will you permit his coming?”

“And welcome,” says Phips. “But how will it be for him to pass over the plank?”

“We will come fore and aft of him, sir,” says the man, “so he shall not fall.”

Receiving permission to do this, they started to reach the rock; and by the foremost man walking backwards—which a sailor can do as easily as a cat—and the other propping him up behind, they gotten him along the plank.

“What ails you, man?” says the Captain kindly to him then, when he was there, but Hanway only groaned and placed his hand on his stomach, so that, sending the sailors back to the isle, we took him between us, and so got him into the captain’s saloon.

“A dram of brandy,” says Phips, “is the thing for you, my man,” and with that he makes to call for his servant; when, to our extreme astonishment,

Hanway puts up his hand to stop him, and stands up, as straight and well as ever he was.

"What foolishness is this?" asks Phips, with his brow all clouded; "what mean you, Hanway, by this conduct?"

"Hush," says he, glancing round the cabin. "Hush! It means—there is no one by, I trust!—it means *mutiny* again, Captain. That's what it means!"

"Does it so?" says he, all calm in a moment, though his eye wandered to his sword and pistols hanging over the table—"does it so? And when and how, Hanway?"

"To-night," says the carpenter; "and from the isle. I have heard it all, though they know not I have heard one word. See, Captain, it was thus. I was lying in the grass under a bush but an hour ago, when there comes that most dreadful wretch, Brooks, with half a score more, and sits himself down on the other syd, behind a clump of cabbage-palms that grew next the bush. And so I heard all. Says he, 'Now, lads, to-night is our occasion, or never. To-night I must have my account with Phips and Crafer, so that there shall be a new captain and a new commander to the *Algier Rose*.'"

"And who," asks Phips, "are to succeed us, Hanway?"

"Brooks, it seems, is to be captain in your place, sir," goes on the carpenter, "and the master-at-arms, Taylor, is to be commander. For the rest I know not; but, sir, let me tell you that, excepting yourself and the officers, myself and the bos'un, all are mutineers, and they mean to get the frigate if they

can and go a-buccaneering to the South Seas, as has been ever their intent since we could not fish up the plate."

"'Tis well, very well," says Phips, "but how will they do it? Can you tell us that?"

"Brooks gives them this scheme, sir," continues Hanway. "'To-night, my hearts,' said he to them, 'there is no moon. Therefore, what easier than to take the ship? We can outnumber them quite easy—the big guns are all ashore, there is not so much as a carronade in her. So, too, are the small arms, the powder and ball; yet, since we must not injure the *Algier Rose*, we must not fire into her, nor need we do so. For,' says he, 'at about dawn, or a little before, we can all pass the plank and reach the rock, when we can descend on the ship and put every one to death that is not for us. And I,' says he, 'will particularly kill Phips, whom I do hate most deadly.'"

Phips smiled and nodded his head pleasantly at this, for all the world as though he had heard the dearest news, and then he says, "And, how much more, Hanway?"

"Only this, sir," goes on the carpenter, "that Brooks knows not what will be the distribution aboard and ashore of the men, and fears therefore that he may get brought into the ship for the night—while the officers may be ashore with the other mutineers."

"He need have no fear," says the captain, very sinister; "when the muster is called it shall be arranged to suit him to his exact pleasure. Now,

Hanway, go you back ashore, mingle freely with them, and trust to me and Mr. Crafer."

Then, when the carpenter had returned ashore, saying he had had a dram and his pains were eased, Phips and I held a long consultation together, and our plan was formed. How it worked you shall soon read.

But ere I go on I must rest my hand.

CHAPTER IX.

AND THE PREPARATIONS AGAINST IT.

It was an hour before sunset that the order was usually given to the bos'un to pipe all hands to muster, and on this fair Sabbath evening you may be sure it failed not. Now, since so much of the ship's company was ashore it was the habit for the few in her to go also ashore, so that the whole roll might be called. Therefore, on this occasion we in the frigate went by the rock and plank to land, leaving the vessel alone save but for two men on watch, and at once began the muster.

The officers were partly divided, some to remain on the isle, some to be in the frigate, I being of the former, the captain of the latter. Now this plan had been communicated to all officers previous to the muster; since Phips had asked two or three of them to supper with him—of whom I was not one, but had, instead, gone on shore—and there he had divulged the whole wicked story. There was not any more danger to those who were ashore than to those in the ship, since Hanway had gathered from some source that the officers on land were not to be despatched until the ship herself was taken, and it was thought she could be easier taken and with less noise than they could be murdered. So that was to be done. Moreover, likewise had Hanway learned that

Brooks hoped some of the mutineers would be told off into the ship, whereby they might lie in wait to spring out and assist their brother-scoundrels when they boarded her, and this, on hearing, Phips again said should be done.

“For,” says he, “since they would have some of their comrades in the frigate, they shall be obliged. Only, they will not know that when the rounds are gone those choice companions will be prisoners all, with bilboes on their feet and gags in their mouths.”

And now, all arrangements being made, ashore we went to call this muster. First I called the officers, naming for the shore myself, a lieutenant, and the master's mate; for the ship, the Captain, the second lieutenant, another mate, and the two gentlemen-midshipmen we carried (we had three, but one was drowned coming out); these being, when they joined the ship, little lads of eight and nine years, scarce better than babes, but now grown big boys. Then, this done, I passed to the others, bringing the carpenter and his mate into the frigate, and likewise the bos'un and his. Next Brooks was called for the shore with most of the known mutineers, excepting only some others of their gang and companions in guilt into the ship. And when this was done there was to be observed, by those who looked sharply, a glance pass between them.

So 'twas arranged, and all was well for the foiling of these villains. And thus, having well concerted our plans, we all went to our various stations, the Captain walking back to the frigate with his

complement, and I in command of the shore party. And now must I relate all that happened both with them—which I gathered afterwards—and with us on land, which I saw. But first for the ship.

At sunset, which comes fast in these parts, the Captain, after the rounds, stationed in his cabin on each side of the door the bo'sun—who was enormous in size—and the carpenter, Hanway; then, sending for each of the known mutineers one by one into the cabin, he had them knocked on the head as they came in, bilboes put on their feet, and they carried down amongst the ballast. With them he put a good guard, who had orders that should they cry out—tho' if they did none could have heard them on the isle—they should instantly be despatched; so they were safe and secure, and henceforth he had but to deal with those ashore. Next he sent for the midshipmen, who, coming into his cabin, he demanded of them which was the lightest in weight; for, said he, "I have work for one of you young lads to-night that shall make a mate of you if you do well."

Now, of these boys—one named Fanshawe, the other Caldwell (who as I now write commands the *Lizard*, of twenty-four guns, he having been promoted out of the *Richmond*)—the latter was by far the lighter, he being very lean and spare. Therefore, to him says Phips:

"My boy, you must do a good service to-night, so I hope you have a strong heart;" to which the lad said he hoped indeed he had; tho', later on, he told me that at that moment his thoughts

went flying off to home and to his mother, who had cried so bitterly when she brought him down to go to sea.

"Well," says Phips, "now this you have to do. We will get from Hanway a bolt—such as those of the big guns—and what you must perform is this. To-night at the darkest you shall creep from the rock to the plank, and so to the middle of it, and, when there, you will first fix a staple under the board, then through that you will run the bolt. Next, where its head will enter you must make a mortise—another staple will do very well—and then when all is fixed you shall, with a bradawl and a gimlet, so bore the board that t'will yield to any weight when the bolt is unshotted. You understand, my lad?"

The boy's eyes sparkled, for he was stout of heart, and he answered readily that he comprehended; and so Phips goes on:

"Then, when all this is done, to the eye of the bolt you shall attach a line and so bring it back under the plank to the further end of the rock, where some one or other shall take it from you. Now, my boy, there is little of danger to you if you are careful. And, remember, first fix your staple, then your bolt, and, last of all, pierce and bore the plank and do it well, and so shall you earn your higher rank. Now go, sleep until we wake you."

The lad told us afterwards he slept not in his hammock at all, but rather repeated to himself his instructions again and again, so as to be perfect; and thus the time wore on, and, at last, there was that

thick inky darkness that comes in tropic nights. Then Phips summoned him, repeated to him once more his orders, and the boy prepared to speed on his work.

"I cannot, my little lad," said Phips, "go with you, nor send the men; the plank would not bear our big forms when bored, and they might see us. Otherwise, and if I could do it, I would not send one of such tender years as thou art. So be brave, and so fare-ye-well and a speedy return."

He laid his great hand on the boy's shoulder as he spake, and bid him again "God speed;" and then the child went forth, his little heart quite brave and cheerful. Only, when he was gone, they found he had left upon his sea-chest, writ large, the place where his mother lived and to where she might be addressed if he came back no more; and also he had writ a little prayer to Phips that he would speak well of him to her, and say that he died in his duty.

That he might so die all knew; and from his writing they learned he knew it, too. For there were many ways to it. The mutineers would doubtless shoot him if they saw him on the plank, and so begin their wicked work at once, or the plank might fall under him, or he fall off it in the dark, when it was well possible—the water being deep enough—that the sharks should have him.

So he went forth, and, of those who saw him go, one or two crept along the rock after him to watch and see if all was well, and they observed, and told afterwards, how he never faltered in his task.

Through the darkness of that black night he crept upon the plank, making no noise, and, laying himself flat out upon it, went to work. Once those behind said they heard the muffled sound of the screws as he fixed tight the staples—though those who knew not what was a-doing might have thought 'twas but the creaking of the board! And once they heard him let fall a screw into the water that plumped in with a little splash. But that was all, and presently by his breathing they heard him coming back. He had done his work—the springe was set! He had done that work well, too, only, so wrought upon was his mind, that, when he once more stood upon the deck of the frigate, he fainted, and fell into the Captain's arms as the latter spake approvingly to him.

Now, therefore, there was nought for them on the ship to do but to wait the coming of the dawn—tho' all in her hoped the mutineers might make their attack ere then. For, if they came when the day-spring was about, it was possible they might perceive the piercings of the plank: while, if they came earlier, they could see nought.

And so, I say, the night went on and the stars above began to pale—the great Southern Cross turned from her deep crimson to a white, and the dews from the little island sent forth innumerable scents and perfumes. Meanwhile, nought could be heard from the shore by those in the ship, for all was still as death; while on the water round the rock a gentle splash alone was heard, telling that those watchers of it, the sharks, were looking ever for some prey. And,

by now, several of the ship's company, headed by Phips, had crept along the rock towards where the plank was, and, heavily armed, and hidden as much as possible, were waiting to see what movement was forthcoming and when the attack was to be made.

CHAPTER X.

AND HOW IT WAS ENDED.

AND now must I return to the party on shore, with which I was.

The watch being set—which throughout the night I took very good care should be composed of those whom I had reason to consider the worst of the mutineers—we, the officers, turned into the hut that had been constructed and set apart for all of that rank. Of course we knew what the intention of the Captain was as to the saving of the plank, and, indeed, were quite cognizant of when young Caldwell was at work on it, though none of the rebels were so. Moreover, when I had reason to suppose he was at his business, I, affecting a merciful disposition towards them which I did not in any way feel, went out to where they lay and told the men on watch to turn in awhile, as I and one of the lieutenants would take the look out for a spell.

Now this I had not planned with the captain previously, it being an after-thought, yet I took credit to myself for its being an excellent one. For see what good came of it! Firstly, it removed the mutinous watch from the open where they might have seen or heard the lad, since the encampment lay but a hundred yards or so inland from the beach; and, secondly, it played the game, as they say, into their hands. For they minded not for us, the officers, to be on the alert

at this early part of the night, but would, as I knew, rather have it so, for they wanted us asleep in the latter part when they meant to set about their dirty work. And it lulled them, as after-events showed, into false security; for, seeing that we treated them so kindly, they never dreamed we had one idea of all their treachery.

And to further this idea in their minds, after eight bells had struck from the frigate, and a fresh watch set, I went in to the men in their huts, and seeing Brooks sitting up and looking very wideawake, I said to him—though in my mind I would sooner have thrust my sword through his heart:

“Brooks,” I said, “we are all sleepy now; therefore we will turn in. And since there is scarce any necessity for caution here—none being able to attack this little isle of ours—relieve your watch somewhat.”

“Ay, ay, sir,” says Brooks, while yet by the oil flame I could see the devil’s light shining in his wicked eye. “Ay, ay, sir. What shall I do?”

“Let most of the watch rest themselves. What need that all should labour? We fear nought here. Leave but two men on watch—the frigate is herself a guardship—and let us take some repose. Only, as I and the other officers are very sleepy, call us not until the day watch; let us not be disturbed.”

“I’ll warrant you, sir,” said Brooks, and positively the fiend hid his head in the shadow so that I might not see the grin on his face, though I saw it well enough, be sure. “I’ll warrant you, sir, you shall not be troubled.” Whereon I bade him good night, and so back to our hut.

“Now,” says I to my comrades when I entered, “all is indeed well. We have but to keep quiet, and these wretches will go to destruction their own way. For, see now, they must be caught between two fires! Once they are on the plank, or some of them, they will be in the water the next moment if Caldwell has but done his work well. And even though he has not, what matters? From the rock they will be shot down, and from the shore by us, while we have this hut for a fort if needed. So now, while we pretend sleep, let us be watchful and await the good time.”

Then, very quietly, we saw to our arms, the bite of our swords and the priming of our pistols. Also had we in the hut some musketoons, very good ones, each loaded with five ounces of iron, which had been brought in from the ship when careened and placed here to guard against rust, as well as some peteraroes loaded with old broken iron and rusty nails, which could well be fired through the doorway.

And now we three put out our light, wishing each other “Good night” somewhat loudly, so that if any were creeping or crawling about they could not but hear, and at intervals of our long vigil we would snore, sometimes in concert, sometimes singly, so as more to deceive them.

And in this manner passed the night, we hearing and counting all the bells as they struck in the ship.

At last there was a stir. Soft as was the grass around, we could hear stealthy footfalls; presently in the open window-frame—purposely left open by us the better to deceive these villains—we saw a face

look in on us and again withdrawn, we heard a whispered talk outside, and then they went away. We knew the attack was about to begin. So, when the footsteps had retreated and we imagined that by now they must have gotten down to the beach (and, indeed, silently as they went, we could hear the pebbles crack and rustle beneath their bare feet), slowly I rose and glanced out from the side of the window. But only to draw back my head on the instant, for there, they not being such fools as might have been supposed, were two of the mutineers on guard, one on each side of the window. At present, 'twas evident they thought not that we were awake, since each was leaning with his back to the walls of the hut gazing after his companions, and I had time to ponder on what I must do.

First, I had the intelligence to say nought to either of my comrades, while for sign I could give none, seeing that, as yet, the day was not come—though afar off a saffron tinge in the sky heralded its near approach—and then I took time to reflect. Now, had there been but one man he had been soon despatched, for I could from the window have run him through, or cut his throat ere he could make any noise. But with two it was different. So, I say, I pondered deep. Yet, soon, this was what I resolved to do. I would go again to the window and then would remain there, a pistol in each hand, and, the moment I heard any scuffle or noise from the neighbourhood of the rock, would fire into their heads. Meanwhile, should they discover that we were awake, yet would I do the same thing—and the noise would

but serve to warn our friends over there. So now I crept to the lieutenant and the master's mate, and, touching them gently in the dark, put my fingers on each of their lips, and then away again to the window.

So I was there, ready for them, for though they had each in their hands a musketoon there was nought to fear. Ere they could lift them the brains would be out, they would be gone—but at this moment up came the sun as it had been promising, and in a moment all was flooded with light. And at the same moment they saw me and gave a shout at seeing my face close to them, and the two pistols to their ears. Poor wretches! all rebels and mutineers as they were, what gain had they in their evil? Ere the shout had finished they were dead outside the hut; even dead before the report had ceased to ring. Yet I had spoilt nothing by my haste, for as now the daylight poured over all I saw that the attack on the rock had begun, and, a moment afterwards, we had rushed pell mell from the hut to assist in taking the mutineers in the flank. And, now, I will write down exactly how our position was. On the rock there stood Phips with all his men by his side, on the plank were two or three of the mutineers with Brooks at their head, and smiling quite gay was Phips, as he called out.

“And ‘good morning’ to you, Captain Brooks, as I hear you are to be to-day. My compliments to you, Captain Brooks, for a better frigate than the *Algier*——”

“To hell with your compliments,” howled back

Brooks, "and your scoffs. Yet we mean to have the ship, anyway; so come on. We are eighty to ten so you must yield."

"Must I, indeed," says Phips, "well, we will see for that."

Meanwhile I had perceived what was my office, and so, going back with the lieutenant and the master's mate—all unperceived by the mutineers, who had been quite engrossed with those on the rock, so that they saw not our sally forth—we dragged out the peteraroes and a little old Lombard we had, very good for throwing a big shot, and lighting our fuse we gave them a rousing broadside and did good execution. The Lombard crashed down four of them, while the peteraroes did great slaughter, and we gave them a volley from the musketoons, and so in amongst them with our cut-lashes and very busy.

Meantime Phips and his party were firing into them from the rock—though not at Brooks and those on the plank, which was shaking under their weight as they advanced; and now the captain shouted to him, "Come on, Captain Brooks, come on and take command of your ship. Come on, I say."

And on Brooks went, hurling oaths like a tempest howling across the sea, and followed by the others; while, now and again, he yelled out, "We are betrayed; we are betrayed," and so got fair into the middle of the plank.

And then he saw, but too late, the snare in which he had been taken. For it bent so under their weight and also gave so that, looking down, he saw it was

all bored and pierced so as to be by now almost apart, and kept up only by the great gun-bolt.

"Back! back!" he screamed then to the others. "Back! See, oh God! see, the plank gives, it yields, we are undone!" And then from him there came a worse cry, a thrilling blood-curdling shout, for he saw what was below him. The sharks which do infest all parts of these waters had come again— attracted, doubtless, by the blood of the killed and wounded and the dead bodies in the water, which already they were busy at; and with them and fighting them for the prey, were fierce crocodiles—or, as they are called by the Spanish, the allagartos. "For God's sake, back!" he howled, "back, I say!" But those behind could not turn back because we were there, and so they met their doom. With one more scoff and jeer Phips and a sailor pulled at the line, the great gun-bolt came forth from the mortise, or staple—the boy had done well his work overnight!—the plank broke with a crash, and down they went.

And as they went we saw the great snouts of the crocodiles come at them, and tear them below with a snapping dreadful to hear, we saw the sharks heave over on their sides to take their prey, we heard one wild and awful yell from each of these villains, and all was over with them. As for the others who were not killed, they threw down their arms and implored mercy, and so were bound and carried away for the time.

And in this way ended the second and last mutiny in the *Algier Rose*, wherefore I will again rest awhile.

CHAPTER XI.

THEY HAVE TO DESIST.

Now, by this time Phips was within a month of his thirty-sixth year, and we had been out on our fishing expedition four years almost, it being the end now of 1686 of our Lord.

"So," says Phips, "another month will see me into my thirty-seventh, and then, Nick, we must have the plate."

"Whereby you mean to say," I observed, "that you do, indeed, believe in that Jack Pudding's prophecy that at that time you shall find it. Yet I should scarce have thought, sir, that so stalwart a sailor as you would have hearkened much to such as he."

"I hearkened to him," replied he, "because I am a sailor, and therefore, like unto you, Nick, and all of us, given unto believing in auguries. Yet, reflect also on what other reasons I have. First, there was my dear mother, whose doings were most rightly foretold; and next was there the vow I always made that, some day, I would command a King's ship. Well, that have I done, though without finding the plate-carrack, and therefore I am positive that when my thirty-sixth year is past I shall do so."

"I trust you may," says I, "yet in four years it has not been done; how, therefore, shall it now be done in one?"

“We will fish in other waters,” says he; “we will try another side of the reef. We will have it, Nick—have it somehow.”

Yet, as you who read this paper shall see, it was not until his thirty-seventh year came—proving thereby, alas! that wizards and astrologers, who are the children of the devil, can speak truth sometimes—that it was to be taken from where it had lain for its forty-four or fifty years. Meanwhile I must perforce write down all that happened before that time.

To begin, therefore, the mutiny was, as you have seen, over, and so rooted up and crushed down also were the men that it was impossible there could be another. Of killed there were thirty-one, including Brooks and the man who was to have had my place, and there was something like twenty-five prisoners; the remainder of the crew, though but few, being tried men and loyal to us. Some of the dead we took into the middle of the beach and buried, while the sharks and crocodiles provided the graves for the others without any trouble to us; and then, all being done that was necessary, we left this sweet little harbour of ours, which, had it not been stained by the horrid mutiny and its outcome, we should have turned away from with regret. But, considering what had happened there, we went back to the blazing sea quite joyfully to begin once more our search.

For those mutineering ruffians who were not killed, it would have been easier to them if they had been. They worked now under the boiling tropic sun in chains, their hands alone being free

wherewith to assist the divers; they were given no more food than would actually keep them alive and enable them to work; they had but one watch off during the twenty-four hours, and over them ever was an officer with a loaded pistol to his hand, ready to shoot them down. And, worse than this, whenever we should return to Spithead there they would be hanged to the yard-arm, as they would have been ere this to the yard-arm of the *Algier Rose*, had they not been wanted to work the ship home when her time came to go. Verily, they had gained little by their wicked foolishness!

So in this way the weeks slipped by and still we found no plate, yet was Phips firm. His commission was for five years, which would carry him well into that thirty-seventh year for which he longed so, and that commission he fully meant to serve, when, lo! there happened a thing that for a time changed all his plans, though not for long, owing to Providence, as you shall read.

One morning when the day broke, the look-out descried, some two leagues from us and our reef, a great frigate sailing very free and bearing down towards us, while to our joy we saw that she carried our own dear English colours. Now, in all the three years and a half that had passed, or nearly four, no ship of our own country had come anywhere near us, although often enough had we thought we saw them pass afar, as, indeed, they must have done on their way to some of the West Indie Islands. Yet, as I say, none had come to us, and so we had no news from the world without. But that this frigate was

making for us there could be now no doubt ; already, she was so near that she was shortening her sail, and, not long afterwards, she fired a salute, which we returned with joyous hearts. Then she hove-to, and signalled to us that the Captain was to go aboard.

You may be sure that he went very willingly, the ship proving to be the *Guinea*, and an old Commonwealth frigate I knew very well, and a good sailer ; and brave enough did Phips look as he took his seat in his boat, all adorned in his best scarlet coat and his great wig ; “ for,” says he, “ hot as the morning is, and will be hotter, I will not go to greet a brother-captain foully dressed.”

That we in the *Algier Rose* waited impatiently enough for the news you may be sure, and, since 'twas long a-coming, that impatience became very great. Indeed, 'twas not till night was near at hand that we saw the boat coming back to us, while at the same time we saw the great frigate's topsayl fill, and observed her slowly gather way and steer towards the west. Then, a while later, the Captain came aboard, and, sending for me into his cabin, he said, while I noticed that his face was grave and sad :

“ Nick, we have to give up the search ; we shall not get the plate now. The frigate was, as doubtless you made out, the *Guinea*, on her way to Jamaica to relieve the *Constant Warwick*, and brought me my orders to go home.”

“ But,” said I, “ the commission was for five years ; they are not yet expired.”

“ Nay,” says he, “ that matters not. The King is dead, and has been so for a year, and the Duke of

York has succeeded him. And he believes not in putting the ships of his navy to treasure hunts, deeming such things better for private adventurers. Moreover, he says the *Algier Rose* can do better service at home against his enemies—of which the Captain of the *Guinea* says he has a many—than in fishing for plate. So, to-morrow, Nick, we will take in water from the island, and away to England.”

“’Tis pity,” says I, “a many pities. Yet the King’s orders must be obey’d. And the plate—I wonder who will get that?”

“I shall,” said Phips sharply, “and you, Nick, if you will follow me. For the very moment I give up my command of this ship, I shall seek out those private adventurers of whom the new King speaks. I would pawn my life the thing is there, and I will have it. Am I a man to be thwarted?”

Indeed, he was no such a man—only, as I whispered to him, he must, if still he believed in his Geomancer, be very sharp. He would be in his thirty-seventh year by the time he set foot on English ground again.

“Ay, ay,” says he, while he took a great drink from his cup and passed it to me, “and so I shall. But before the thirty-seventh year is gone, I shall be back again—and you shall be with me, Nick, an’ you will.”

For myself ’twas very easy to say I would come. If James was king now, then he would have for officers of his ships all those who had served him when he was a sailor, and never had I been one of those. Moreover, I had no interest with either Edward Russell—who is now as I write Earl of

Orford—or with Rooke, both of whom were like to be the King's great seamen; so that there was little enough likelihood that I should get another ship. There were just now hundreds of worthy sailors waiting for appointments, and I had no better chance than, if as good as, they. Also was I gone my time, having been now at sea since 1656, when I went a boy of eight, so that I was nigh forty years of age, and was never like now to be a captain, being but a plain sailor and no gentleman courtier or page of honour. Had I been that and not known the main-truck from the keel, then, perhaps, might I have gotten a ship at twenty. But enough of this, only I had a mind to come out with Phips if he came again as an adventurer; and that we should see when we got home.

A week later we had wooded and watered from our isle, and the wind being fair away we went, while the last piece of counsel we received came from the beastly great negro of whom I have writ before. This creature's name was Juan, he having been born at San Domingo city, a Spanish slave, which he no longer was, and as we had always thought, though we were never convinced thereof, had egged on Brooks and the others to mutiny by telling of them that we were a-fishing in the wrong pool—as anglers at home say—but that if they could take the frigate from Phips, whom he hated, he could show them where the plate really was.

So now he shouted to us from his periaga, as 'tis called there,

“*Adios, Don Phipo, adios.* Berry sorie, Massa,

you no find platy, but you look not in proper place. You ever come back again, which not berry like, you send for Juan and pay him better, he show you many tings if he not show it someone else firsty. *Adios, Don Phipo, adios cada uno*, I hope you berry nice cruise to Englishy waters. *Adios,*" and with that he hoisted his little sail and was gone.

Phips scowled at him first and then burst out a-laughing, while one of the sailors flung a musket ball at him, and so we sailed away disappointed men.

"A very nice cruise" it was not our good fortune to have, for we were teased and pestered with contrary winds and storms all the way. Then we got into the Horse latitudes—where the Spanish used to throw their horses overboard on their way to the Indie Islands, to lighten their ships so that they could move in the calm—or called by some the Doldrums—and here we lay for some weeks. There we suffered much in every way. The sea is here like glass, there is not a wind to stir a sail nor to refresh the panting men, and the air is like a furnace. Moreover, here the seams of a ship will yawn, the meat become rotten, and the hoops shrink away off the casks so that they burst and leak, letting out the water—of beer we had naturally none left. The sea, too, looks lyke oil and not water, while the setting of the sun gives one the idea that the whole world is a-fire. Great crimson fleaks of flames blaze all across the heavens, then tinges of saffron, green, and pink shoot up, and then comes the grey darkness, as though 'twas the smoke after the fire.

And while we who were free all this time suffered so, 'twas far worse and more terrible with the condemned mutineers, for, being down in the ballast, since there was nought for them to do on deck while we lay still, their agonies from the heat were insufferable. Five of them did die—even though at the last they were fetched above—and so 'twas better for them, since had they lived there was nought but the hanging at Spithead before them.

Thus, when at last we got a wind which took us home—and a roaring, tearing wind indeed it was, that sent us often under bare poles with fear every moment that our crazy frigate with her open seams must go to the bottom—we worked very short-handed. Yet home at last we did get, looking like scarecrows in a field, and so yellow that those who knew us said that, if we had found no silver, at least we had brought a plenty of gold on our faces. Yet right glad were we to see old England again after so long, and to sleep once more in a good English bed.

CHAPTER XII.

THE BARK "FURIE."

Now I will not write down much as to how we found the state of things on our return, yet somewhat must I say.

To begin with—all of which was very bad for our hopes of getting another ship—we found the King a dreadful declared Papist and with most of the nation against him. Moreover, he was passing daily laws and regulations for the oppression of the Protestants, so that he was much hated, and all the world wagged its head and said that so extreme a tyrant must ruin England unless a change came. And some there were who even went so far as to say he had poisoned King Charles—though this was never proved, and concerns not my history, to which I now return.

When the *Algier Rose* was paid off (which was done in a way shameful to our navy—namely, by giving us but half of what was due and the other half in promises, which were not fulfilled until the next King's reign, and then only with difficulty to us) Phips and I, who went to live together near the Strand, saw very soon that we should get no other King's ship to go back to Hispaniola. His Ministers laughed at us when we sounded them; one old nobleman asking us if we thought his Majesty had not

enough to do with his vessels, without sending them on any such fool's errand as this? And, indeed, he was right, for things were thickening round James, we being come to the year 1687. People had not forgot the Monmouth rebellion and its brutalities, of which we heard now for the first time; they hated the King's doings and his mass in the chapel, and although he had a great big army at Hounslow this year—which Phips and I rode down to see—all the soldiers had an aversion to his religion, excepting the few Papists among them. On the sea he was not very busy just now, and no fighting done since we went away; yet it was ever thought that trouble would come—as indeed it did, though not in the way expected.

So, therefore, as now you will see who read, we had to turn our thoughts to other ways, and at once we began to look about for some proprietors who would send us forth to look again for the Hispaniola plate.

At first we had no success. Indeed, in the City, to which we resorted, the project was treated by the merchants and goldsmiths with extreme contempt, they jeering at us; while one of the latter told us he had gotten together more plate than he desired, and would cheerfully *sell* us some. But this was not our business, so we looked again. And now, at last, we heard of one who we thought would do for us—our knowledge of him being produced and brought to us by a friend who knew what we were seeking for. And the person to whom he pointed was Christopher Monk, the second Duke of Albemarle.

This nobleman had in no ways ever done ought to carry on the great reputation of his father; but, instead, he had, on coming into a most enormous fortune at that father's death, twenty years ago, given himself up to loose and vicious courses, as well as having a ravenous liking for drink. Yet one fancy he had which improved on this, and was very good for us and our desires—viz., he loved to hear of treasure-finds, of the sacking of cities for plunder: such as those of Drake in the Indies in the Great Queen's reign, or of Sir Henry Morgan, the buccaneer who sacked Panama and Porto Bello, wherefore the late King gave him the government of Jamaica, which Albemarle was afterwards himself to have; and, above all, of the digging up of hidden wealth. So to him, having obtained a letter introducing us, away went Phips and I to see what might be done.

He listened very attentively to us and, when Phips said he did in truth believe there was three hundred thousand pounds under the water, he sighed and said he would he could have some of it, for he wanted money badly. This we could well believe; for though his father left him so vast a fortune, he was a heavy gambler, and his Duchess—a half-witted creature, granddaughter of the Duke of Newcastle, to whom he was married before his dying father, as he lay on his bed—had ravaged him with her extravagance and debts.

So says Phips to him:

“Then, your Grace, if you will have it you shall. Find me but a ship well fitted and this very year—no other—it shall be yours. It is there, I know; I have

much evidence it is ; and though I have fished in the wrong place hitherto, yet now will I find it. And, as I say, it is my year."

"Why, sir," said the Duke, "why this year more than any other?"

Yet this Phips would not tell him—confiding in me afterwards that, though he believed in the astrologer, he was ashamed of his belief. So, then, next says the Duke :

"But why seek not the Spanish, or the French, who have now gotten possession of the North of Hispaniola, if not all of the island, for this plate? 'Tis worth their while, if 'tis worth mine."

"Your Grace," says Phips, "it is not possible they should seek for it. Ever and always are they fighting together for possession, when not massacring of the natives—of whom three millions have been slain since Columbus's day—and truly they have neither time nor inclination, even if they believe, which all do not. Then, for private adventurers, there are none among them who can or will risk the money ; so that if any find it it must be an Englishman."

In this way, and with many other arguments and proofs, did Phips press it on the Duke—particularly leaning on the boat that came ashore, after the wreck of the carrack, full of plate ; so that, at last, he said he would think well upon it, and bade us come again in a week's time.

"For," says he, "of myself I cannot now do it, though I could very well once"—and here he sighed—"when I had my father's fortune. But now I am no longer rich and am even petitioning the King for

employment, and have the promise of Jamaica. Still I will see among my friends, and I will ask the King's permission. He, you know, must have a tenth and adventure nothing."

"Let his Majesty have it," says Phips, "and then I'll warrant your Grace there shall be enough to satisfy all."

"Sir, you are very sanguine," says the Duke. "But, there, come in a week and you shall hear."

So we made our bow and left him.

Now, I have so much yet to write of the finding of the plate and then all that followed, as well as to tell you, who may read, how you shall also find a fortune if you will seek, that I must waste no space, but crowd on with my story.

So I will briefly write down that, when the week was past, we went to the Duke's again, and he coming up to us—a little flustered with his morning tankard, as I thought, though no ways drunk—takes Phips by the hand and then me, and says he:

"Gentlemen, I think it is done, and we must send you out. So now listen to what I have attempted."

And with that he bade his serving-men begone and see he was not interrupted till he called. Then he went on:

"I have gotten," he said, "a ship for you, not so good as a King's ship, yet well found, of a good burthen. The crew you shall pick up yourselves—God knows there are many sailors now in London wanting bread! Then, as for repayment, you and Captain Crafer"—for so he called me, though I was no captain—"must be willing to be paid by return,

or what the merchants call a 'per centum.' Now, are you willing to do this?"

We said we were very willing provided we were put to no expense for provisions or furnishing of the ship, which we could not do, and he said that matter should be arranged, as well as the payment of the sailors, which must be part now and part hereafter, when we returned, out of the proceeds. So after many more particulars we agreed to all, and we left the Duke to go into the city and see the merchants, and then to attend to fitting of the ship.

She was, we found, when we got to her in Limehouse Pool, after we had spoken with the merchants very satisfactory, a good bluff-bowed bark named the *Furie*, who had been employed in the slave trade, about which we did not inquire too curiously, knowing very well what uses the Guinea merchants put such ships to. Suffice it, therefore, if I say she was large and roomy for her size, with many good cabins, especially on the deck, a good main cabin, and a clear fo'castle. And so we set to work to pick up a crew.

Now, as the Duke had truly said, there was no want of sailors just now; for, firstly, we were not at war with any power; and, secondly, the men went in but slowly to the King's ships of war because their pay was so uncertain; and, thirdly, because all were against him, hating the Papists he had gotten both into the navy and army, and hating him too, as well as his Papist Queen, who had passed off a false heir on the nation, as they said; and also his beastly mistress, Sedley, now made Lady Dorchester. So when we went about the taverns of Blackwall and

Wapping, we soon picked up a likely crew enough, and when we told what our cruise was for—namely, to get up a treasure-ship—they were all eager to come. Therefore, at last we did get more offers than we could well accept, seeing that we wanted but twenty, and so made a good pick. Of them some were old King's men who had seen much service like myself, two had taken part in Sir Robert Holne's "bonfire," when he burnt up the Dutch ships, some more had fought under Prince Rupert—as I did—when he beat De Ruyter, others had fought against Selvagees' Armada, and all were of much experience.

Now, therefore, we had but to victual the bark and to put in our beer and water, and all was ready; so to it we went, the merchants behaving very generously. Yet, since Phips felt sure—owing to his belief in his precious geomancer, who was doubtless hanged for a knave ere now—that we should not be gone a year, we by no means overloaded her. Still, all was very well; we went out with a plenty of beef and pork, a gallon of beer a man every day for some months, with, after that, some spirituous liquors, and with good pease and oatmeal as well as bread. Also, which was of equal need, we had good arms, taking with us new cutlashes and muskets, several cannon, including two thirty-two-pound ones and a twenty-four, some pierriers, or swivel-guns, very useful, and several others. And, since this time we hoped not to fail, we took all applications for diving, such as a bell, pumps, bladders for the head, and so forth, such as was used at Mull for fishing up part of the Spanish Armada in the beginning of the late King's reign.

And so we went away again to find, as you shall read, the Hispaniola Plate. But to set it down baldly and to say only that we did so find it, would be to give no help to those who shall come after me, whenever that shall be. Therefore, when next I take up my pen I must tell of all our doings, of the way in which the treasure was gotten, and of that uncommon villain who was soon now to appear amongst us, and who did, in very truth, by his extreme villainies, lead to my crowding the paper as I do for the benefit of those who follow me.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE OLD MAN'S STORY.

Now, therefore, we are again at Hispaniola and have got near unto the Bajo de la Plata, or Boylers, once more, having made an extreme good cruise from England. The *Furie* was indeed, we found, a good little barky, she sailing well on the wind, which was ever most favourable for us, and so bringing us across the ocean in twenty-four days.

But ere we went out to the reef there were some things that passed which I must write down. First, we anchored off Porto de la Plata, which, as I have writ, was so named from the boat that went ashore full of plate from the wreck fifty years—or now more—before, and which is now the port of St. Jago de los Cavalleros ; and here we purchased a tender which it was our intention to use, so that there might be two searchings made for the lost ship. Also we meant to have some canoes, or periagas, so that they could go where neither the ship nor the tender could go themselves, and thereby we did intend to scour all the water round about the reef.

But, Lord ! who would not have been discouraged by all the merriment that our return caused—who, I say, but Phips ? For those who lived at Porto did openly make mock of us, jeering at us for our coming back, and calling of us the mad Englishmen ; while,

if it may be believed, people did even come over from St. Jago, which is inland, to see us and our silly ship, as they called it. Now, the people here were of all kinds—there were Spaniards and Portugees, and also some French who had by now gotten all that part of the isle to the west of Monte Christo on the N. and Cape Mongon on the S., though no legal settlement until later, as well as creoles and mulattoes, and many more. And with one accord all laughed at us, saying, “There is no plate, be sure, or we would have had it long ago.”

Yet still Phips, and with him all of us, believed it was there.

But now there came and sought us out the great monstrous negro diver, Juan, who, after finding through me that Phips bore him no ill-will for his last fleeing farewell of us, said that he had somewhat to tell us if we would hearken to him. So I gave him an appointment to see the Captain the next day, and a promise that he should be safe from any harm; and so he came out in his periaga to where we lay a league off shore. And he brought along with him the queerest of old men that ever I did set eyes on—an old shrivelled-up Portugee who looked as though he was an hundred, half-blind, and with a kind of shaking palsy all over him.

Then, when I took them into the cabin where Phips was, he, being ever of a jocund vein, called out:

“And good morning to you, Signor Juan, and how do you do? You see you were no true prophet, since here we are come back again.”

The hideous negro made a shambling bow, and

hoped his honour was well, and then in a jargon of Spanish and English, very hard for me to understand, and not to be faithfully written down, he said :

“Masser Phips, I bery sorry I larf at you when you went away. But I never tink, no never, that you come back again. But since you come, I tell you many tings I have founder outer. Sir, this old Signor, he know much, he berry old”—and here the brute opened and shut his great hands nine times, very quick—“he have see ninety summers.”

“Has he, indeed ?” says the Captain, “that seems a long while to me who have seen but thirty-six as yet. And what has the Signor seen in all that time ?”

“He see many tings. He see the boaty come ashore with the silver plate—beautiful plate, many candlestickies, bagges of pieces, salivers and lumpes. All gone now !”

Then here the old Portuguese screamed out, also in a sort of English,

“Yees, yees. All gone now, Spanish sailors drink all up, then die. Die very soon afterwards. Drink all day and danze with the girls, then die.”

“Well,” says Phips, “what good’s that to me ? If the drink and the girls got all, I can profit nothing.”

“He, he,” laughed the old man, till he nigh choked, “got all that came in the boat, not all under the water. No, no !”

“Plenty more under water,” grunted Juan, “so he say. Plenty more. Only no one able to get it and no one believe. He poor old Portygee, me poor negro, so no one believe.”

"What does he know?" says Phips, "and, if you knew, why had you no mind to speak when first we came here and I employed you?"

"Signor Phips," said the black, "then I knew of nothing; I only suspect you fished in wrong place. Then when you go away to English land there make much talk about you, and all ask me if English captain find much? And I say, no, and don't tink anyone find anyting. Then old man here—he ninety summers old!—then old man, Geronimo, he come in from mines of Hayna in middle of country, where he lived forty year, and hear of talk about you and the silver, and of me the Buzo" (which means a diver), "and he say he wish he come back sooner much, because he know where carrack lie, where shift off reefy."

"Shift off the reef!" exclaimed the Captain and myself together, with a glance at each other. "Is that so indeed?"

Then the old Portygee burst out laughing and then choking, and then when he found his voice again, he said,

"Yees, yees; that so. I see sailors come ashore with plate. I drink with them, I danze with girls, too, only I not die. That very long ago now; girls all dead, too. He! he! Oh!" and again he had his spasms.

Then once more he went on:

"And so, Signor, because I was a fisherman, I go out to the Bajo and I look about, only I fear Tiburons (sharks), and once when water very low I see down deep a cannon, then I know the ship had shifted. So

another day I go look again, and there floated up a piece of the ship, a rail, so I know for certain she move. Then I speak to many and I say I know where carrack is, but they believed not and would do nothing. And now they all dead, too, like the sailors and the girls. He! he! Ha! ha! Oh! oh!"

We talked long with this miserable relic of the past—who so angered Phips with his recollections of the dead and the gone, especially the girls, that he almost ordered him out of the ship—and, indeed, it did seem as if at last we had lighted on some good news. He said, when he could persuade no one to believe or lend a hand to search further, he went away to the mines of Hayna, in the interior, where a fresh find of gold was made, and there he stayed for all the years, making a little livelihood and forgetting all about the plate ship. Then, having at last struck ninety—on which he laid great stress, as though an action of credit done by himself—he came back to Porto where he belonged, and fell in with Juan. And this black told us that when he did, indeed, come back and heard that we had been and gone, he fell into such a paroxysm of rage and grief that he nearly died, "for now," said he, "my chance is gone."

So the old figger thought all was lost to him, and bemoaned his fate and nigh went mad, until one day the Buzo went off to find him and tell him that the Captain Phips was come once more back, but in another ship. Whereupon he did once more go nearly mad, this time with joy, and then made Juan bring him out in his periaga to us.

So, after hearing all this, Phips says to him:

"Supposing you put us in the way to find this plate, what terms are we to make? What do you want?"

"Half," says the old man. "I am now ninety years of age. I want to be rich for the rest of my life."

"Tush!" says the Captain, "this is foolishness. Why should I give you half? I know now the earraek has shifted; I can find it for myself. You shall have nothing."

"No, no!" screamed the old Portygee, while the big black negro began to mutter; and then Geronimo, as he was called, threw himself down on his knees with most marvellous dexterity for his great age. "No, no!" says he, "not that. I will tell you, and you shall offer me what you will. Me and Juan. Give us what you will."

"Indeed I shall," says Phips, "seeing that you came to me, and not I sought you. Therefore, let us see. How much think you there is below the water?"

"The Saints only know," said Geronimo, "but since she was taking home to Spain the fortunes of many from Cuba, as the sailors told me, she must have been full. Oh! Signor Capitano, promise me something, give me something!" and he clasped the Captain's legs about and wept.

"Well, now," says Phips, "see what I will do for you. You and this negro diver shall tell me exactly where she lies, or as near as may be, and if I find her you shall have this."

"The Saints bless you, capitano; I am nearly ninety years."

"Be still. You shall have this between you, the negro to dive for me with my own English diver. You shall have for every five pounds of silver or of gold, one ounce, no matter whether we find much or little. Are you content?"

At first both of them began to grumble, saying it was not enough. But soon Phips persuaded them to reason in a way that was all his own.

"Then," says he, doing so all in an appearance of sudden violence, "begone out of my ship. Away with you! What! shall I come from England twice to find what I knew of a surety five years ago was here, only to traffic with such as you, and you?" pointing his finger at each. "Nay, never! We will find it by ourselves. Begone, I say!"

But to begone was not their purpose, since very well they knew that without us they could do nought. Strange as it may seem—and very strange it was—none in Hispaniola would hearken to the story of the plate ship lying so near—for the Boylers are not a dozen leagues out from the island—and so would do nothing, and therefore they could do nought themselves. For to do anything a small vessel at least was wanted, and the means wherewith to dive—and certainly the Portygee had no money for this, while the black was little than a beggar. Therefore, at once they sang another song, becoming directly very lowly, and saying, "Well, then, they would take the Captain's offer," only I liked not the look on the face of Juan, the Buzo, and from that moment determined to watch him well.

Now, therefore, I have to say that all terms were

made, and we were ready to go out to the reef. We bought a tender, and we meant when we got to our little isle of old, where the second mutiny was, to make some canoes of some excellent cotton trees that were there, with which we could go about, and see better when near the reef down into the water.

The negro Juan was to come, first as diver, next as on behalf of himself and Geronimo to see we played fair, and he it was also to whom the Portygee confided the exact spot where he had seen the rail float up years ago, since he would not tell us, saying Juan would take us to the place.

So we went away, being delayed, however, two days by the accursed Blackamoor, who we thought at first had played us false—perhaps, indeed, found new employers who would pay him better. However, at last we saw him coming out in his periaga—and none too soon neither, since we meant to go without him next morning if he came not, and try our luck alone—and when he and his craft were gotten aboard, he excused himself by saying he had been having a *festa* on shore and getting drunk with some of his friends.

“Good,” says Phips when he heard this, “only, my black treasure, remember there is no drunkenness for you here. Because, you see,” he went on, “I’m Captain aboard this craft, and if anyone displeases me I let them understand it. So, if you want to keep your brains in your head and your ebony skin whole, remember that. And now, bos’un,” says he, “pipe all hands on deck and loose sail for the reef.”

CHAPTER XIV.

THE WRECK IS FOUND.

AND now I have to write down what we found, only, as such long writing is even now difficult to me, I must do it in my own fashion. And that fashion is, that I can do nothing except by proceeding leisurely and describing each incident as it came about. Which I now again attempt.

The soft wind carried us out past the Boylers the next day at noontide, and then, as we went by, we parted with our tender, the ship going on to our little isle of old. For 'twas here we meant to construct the cotton-wood canoes, to take in some of the island water—the sweetest I ever tasted, which caused us to take it from there—and to leave some stores. The tender which we left behind—though not very far, since the isle was but three leagues beyond the Bajo—was in charge of our master mate, as he was rated, an old King's man like myself, and, like myself, sick of the King's service. He was a good sailor and named Ayscough. His orders were to proceed to whatever point near that the African should suggest as the reputed place where the carrack was shifted to, to anchor if possible, or, if not, to put out the floating anchors, and there to remain until we returned. But no matter what was perceived, even should it be the carrack herself at the bottom, neither our own diver

nor the Black was to be allowed to descend, especially not the last.

Then, having given these orders, we did remain on our isle two days, what time Phips worked as hard as any man in the ship with his own hands, shaping and arranging of the cotton-wood canoes, inspiring every one with his ardours and cheering them on. What, however, did not cheer any of us, was a-finding that some of the bodies of the mutineers of the isle had the sand blown all off them where they were buried on the beach, and that their skeletons were lying white and bleached before us. Verily, a dreadful memorial of their wickedness!

Moreover, another thing we saw which we liked not any too well; namely, we found drawn up in a little cove a ship's boat, with on it the name, "*The Etoyle*, Provydence," and in it many ropes, hooks, and head-bladders, all carefully wrapped up and evidently for use in diving.

"Now," says Phips, "this is not well. There is nought to dive for here but one thing—the Plate Ship—therefore it seems to me that someone else has been about our office. Yet it is certain they have not been successful. Had they been we must have heard of it at Porto. What think you, Nick?"

"That depends," says I, "on which Provydence those who own the boat hail from. If 'tis that of the Bahamas, then 'tis very well, since they are ours again since '66, and as King James takes his tenth of our find, we have the precedence of all. So 'tis, if it's that by Connecticut, which is but a hamlet. But if 'tis that off Honduras, then 'tis bad, since 'tis inhabited

by buccaneers only, if inhabited at all; and, if them, we may have some trouble."

"Well, well," says he, "we must see. Meanwhile I incline to it hailing from the Bahamas. For look you, Nick, 'Provydence' is good English and not Spanish, as most of the buccaneers are. And by the same token it may be the Provydence in our own American colonies. Moreover, the buccaneers as a rule put no markes in their crafts."

"Etoyle," says I, "is not English, though!"

"Neither," replies he, "is it Spanish. And," with his fierce lion look upon his face, he went on, "belong it either to English, French, or Spanish colonist or to pirate, they shall not have our treasure while we are above water."

So, all being done, we went back to rejoin the tender.

Now, when we got to her we heard that the Blackamoor had directed that she should proceed to a spot immediately on the other, or eastern side, of the reef, from which we had previously fished, since there it was that the old man, Geronimo, had laid down that we should find the wreck. So Ayseough had taken her to this spot, namely, half a league away from the Boylers, and we found all preparations made for a descent, Juan, the Buzo, being particularly keen to go down at once. But now we summoned our own diver—a straightforward, honest Englishman, whose name was Woods—to come and confer with us, and asked him what he thought. Then he told us that the soundings were good enough for a descent, since the bottom was not more than twenty fathoms

below where we were anchored, and that the tallow brought up soft sand and limestone, which showed a good bed.

"Therefore," says Phips, "you can reach the bottom, can you not?"

"If not, sir," says he, "I can at least descend so far as to see the bottom, and if then I find the wreck it shall go hard but that I will get down to her. My diving chest can sink easily to forty feet, and with Mister Halley's* new dress I am confident I can touch the bottom here."

"So be it," says Phips, "and now about the Black. Here you, sir," then he calls out to Juan, who was even now leaning over the gunwale, peering down into the hot sea, "come here and tell us how you propose to reach the bottom."

"That very easy, sir," answered he; "I have new dress Massa Woods lend me, which I am sure I manage very nicely. I go down if the Signor Capitan wish me."

"No," says Phips, "Woods shall go down first. And since 'tis a calm morning, get you ready now, Woods."

At once the man did this, going forward to where he berthed in the ship, and returning presently a strange figure to behold, since now he was all enveloped in Mr. Halley's new improved dress, all over cords for lowering and pipes for a-taking in the air.

* He was Astronomer Royal from 1719 to 1742, but in Phips' time had made many improvements and suggestions in the necessary apparatus for divers.—J. B.-B.

"For," says he, "I will try this, sir, now, and see how far I can go down."

You may be sure all watched him with eagerness. For besides that we hoped he should find below what we sought, but a few of us had ever seen this dress before, and were almost afraid of what might come to him. Yet, he assured us, we need to have no fear; he had made many experiments and descents as trials at home in the sea and river Thames, and was confident of what he could do. So, as calmly as if he were going down the stairs of a house, he bade the sailors lower him over from the gangway, and descended by the lines he had arranged and was gone beneath the sea, and in a few moments there was nought but a few bubbles to mark the spot where he had been.

Presently we knew by a signal agreed upon with those who held the ropes, that he had reached the bed, and then by the paying out of his pipes that he was moving about. And so he stayed thus for some twelve minutes, when we also knew he was returning to below the ship, and then there came the next signal to haul him up again, which, being done, his great helmet with its fierce goggle eyes appeared above the water once more, he following.

Tied on to him he bore two things, one a great beam of wood in which was stuck pieces of jagged rock, which looked for all the world like the great teeth of some beast that had been fastened in't and then broken off—they were indeed bits of the reef—the other a great piece of limestone as big as my head, all crusted and stuck over with little

disks or plates, which were, we found, rusty pieces of eight.

"A sign! A sign!" says Phips, taking them from him; "now get your breath, Woods, and tell us what you have found," and this the man did, puffing and blowing freely for a time ere he could speak.

Then he said, "Of the wreck, sir, I have seen nought, but surely I have found the track. All the bottom of the sea is scored as though some great thing had passed over it, and everywhere there lie great lumps of limestone such as this, and great beams such as that."

"Ha!" says Phips, and with that he takes the diver's axe and splits open the lump, and there, wedged in all over it, were many more rusty old pieces. "Ha! she has left a silver track as she passed along. Go on."

"So I do think, sir," says the diver, "and she cannot be afar off where I descended, unless she is all gone to pieces. And even then the bed of the sea must be full of all she had gotten inside her. But, sir, I think this is not so; I think she has been brought up short, for, close by, as I gather, is another reef."

"How far off? How far off?" suddenly called out the captain, full of strange excitement.

"Not two cables off, I think, sir," replies Woods, "since the bottom where I was begins to rise towards it, and therefore—"

"And therefore," exclaims Phips, "it is the reef itself! Marvellous strange it seemed to me that a great Spanish galleon should have shifted at the bottom of

the sea—whoever heard of a ship that moved below the water!—yet all would have it so; even you, Woods, thought so yourself! But now I know all. She struck upon a spur of the reef and not the reef itself, and she has never moved. In which direction does the rise of bottom of which you speak begin?”

The diver look't round, tracing his course beneath, and then, pointing to the Boylers, or Bajo, said, “There, sir.”

“Why, so 'tis, of course,” says Phips. “And, as I say, her keel took the first, or outside spur of the reef as she passed along, and she never got nearer to the main one. She is there! She is there! Hearts up, my lads, we have found the treasure ship!”

I gave the word and up went a roaring cheer from all, one for Phips, one for the galleon, and one for what she had got in her, or about her, if she had broken up. Then Phips, all alive now, gives an order to shift the tender to the spot where Woods did consider the ridge of the spur should be, and bade the diver come along with us in it to go down again. Though, a moment afterwards, he paused, saying in his kindly way,

“Yet no, Woods. You have done enough work for to-day. You shall rest easy. Now, where is that Blackamoor? He shall go.”

The negro came forward, his eyes glistening—perhaps with the hope of what he should find—and to him says Phips,

“Get you into the dress, or, since you are new to

that, into the diver's chest; that shall do very well for finding of the reef, and, perhaps, the carrack—she cannot be afar. Come, away with you."

So, into the tender got the captain and I and the negro, and the sailors told off to her, and in a few moments we were apeak of the spot where Woods said the reef must be. And then to our astonishment—for we had never been this side of the Boylers before, and, consequently, had never seen any shoal water—of which, indeed, there was little ever—on looking down we saw, not three feet below the surface, the long sharks-toothed back of the spur.

"Great Powers!" says Phips, "'twas here all those years we wasted on the other side, and we never thought to even come round to this. Fools! fools! that we were. We might have had the treasure back into London long ago. Now," says he, turning from his meditations to actions, "now," to the black, "into your tub and down with you."

Nothing loth, for the great beast was as eager for gain as any of us, into the chest did he get and was lowered away, but scarce had the top of it sunk beneath the water when the rope quivered, then the signal was given to haul up, and back he came, and, jumping out of the chest, or bell, exclaimed excitedly,

"Oh! Signor Phips. Oh, Signor Capitan Com-mandante. The shippy all down there. Fust ting the chest knock on cannon sticking up in water, then against her sidy, then I bery much frightened, for I see dead man's head looking at me out of hole. Oh!

Capitan Commandante, the shippy there, and she full of dead men. Oh ! capitan, send Massa Woods down to see if I speak truf."

So you see we had found the ship

"And," says Phips, that night, as we drank together, "it is my thirty-seventh year!"

CHAPTER XV.

WHAT THE FIRST SEARCH REVEALED.

Now, therefore, have I to write down of all that, having found the ship, we found in her. Yet how shall I begin?

Firstly, let me describe how it was with the carrack herself.

She lay canted right over on to her larboard side, the whole of her larboard forepart broke away and stove in, and crushed as would be an egg beaten in with a hammer. And in the fifty years—if it were so long—in which she had been there she seemed to have grown so much to the reef, or the reef to her, that they seemed part and parcel of one another. She must, we could see at once, have struck full head on, and the wicked teeth of the rock had torn her forepart to pieces. Whether at once she heeled over and sank was never to be known now, or whether she filled and sank after a while. Perhaps 'twas the latter, since, otherwise, it was not to be understood how those sailors whom Geronimo had known and danced with, and sang with, could, had she turned over in a sudden shock, have ever collected together the plate they had, and have gotten away in the open boat.

Aft, from the beginning of her waist above, she was not broken into at all, being quite sound on her

starboard side as she lay, though, as we found, her larboard side aft, which lay on the bottom, had rotted somewhat and bulged away, so that what was in her on that side was, indeed, lying on the sea's bed. Her masts and yards were all broke off short, and the broken pieces, into which the limestone had not wedged itself and so held them down, had doubtless risen and floated. And this must have been the case with the stern-rail which the old Portuguese had seen, though why that went adrift we never rightly understood, since no other part of the stern was gone. We found all this out later on, as you shall see, when we determined what we must do; but now Phips and I went apart to hold a conference, the first thing he said being,

"Nick, we have found the plate ship, therefore is one, nay, the greatest, of our difficulties over. But with this begins the necessity for great caution. For, see you, Nick, we cannot trust the overhauling of this ship to the two divers alone. We must know all that is in her, and we must see that all comes safe up and into our hands. What, therefore, shall be done?"

"Easy enough," says I, "to answer that. It's for you or me, sir, who are the responsible officers, to be divers too." This I said, for I had quickly caught his meaning. Then I went on, "As for myself, I will cheerfully go down."

"Have you ever dived?" asked he.

"No," I replied, "but I can soon learn myself to do so. Woods had never used this dress until a little while ere he came aboard the *Furie*; yet, now, see

what he can do ; and what he can, so can I. Therefore, unless you go I will."

He thought a little while—perhaps communing with himself as to whether 'twas not his duty to go—but at last he said,

"Well, that way is p'raps best. You shall go, but to-day—since it grows on apace—there shall be no new descent. To-night we will rest, and then begin the work to-morrow. That shall suffice."

So we did no more that day, only we signalled for the bark to come nearer to us and so anchored her a little closer to the Bajo, and then all who were in the tender went off and into her for the night, the spot by the reef being buoyed, though there was little enough need for that, since, now we knew where to look, we could easily see the shoal water.

One thing we desired to know, so sent for the black to tell us—namely, what he meant by saying that he saw a dead man looking at him from a hole.

"Oh ! signor," he said, when he had come in to us, "oh, signor, I see him berry plain. He leanie right out of big port-hole, his body half way out, his bony hands holding to the sides, his bony skull turned up to me."

"Nonsense," says Phips, "his hands and head would have fallen off long ago. You dreamed it, man !"

But the black asseverated that he had not dreamed it, and so we left it until to-morrow to see.

Now, when the morning came, at once we made our preparations for the descent. Woods and I were to go down first, he telling me that it was nought to

do; that to begin with I should feel a suffocation which would soon pass away, and that, excepting I would seem to be surrounded by green glass full of bubbles, 'twould not be so very strange. Moreover, he told me to fear nothing, no, not even a shark if he came near me, for he would be more affrighted than I, since he knew not what I might be.

So down to the carrack we descended.

First went Woods, saying he would wait for me at the bottom to set me on my feet, and so, as easy as ever, over he went and disappeared from all sight, and then my turn came, and the sailors lowered me from the gunwale.

In a moment I was sinking through the waters, all blue and green and bubbling, passing as I went the cannon sticking up from its port—it had been left run out when the ship sank, and was a long Spanish one, its muzzle formed like a snake's mouth, and looking three times the size it really was, since the water much magnified it—and so down, seeing fishes dart all around me, looking with frightened eyes at my strange figure. Then I felt my feet clasped by Woods and placed firm upon the bottom, and I was there.

And what a strange sight did meet my eyes! Firstly I perceived I was not on the bottom at all, but standing on the upturned starboard side of the ship, quite near by the great cannon, and also to an open port. Yet, as she was not entirely canted over but lay at an angle, 'twas very hard work to support one'self steady, and I was very glad to cling to a stanchion for the time. But, now, Woods taking me

by the hand did lead me up the chain wales and so over the bow, until I stood with him upon the deck, which was here not difficult ; and then I look'd around.

The first thing to be perceived was that the whole of the deck was swept clean of most that had been on't, except such things as the hatch-hoods which were fixed, the after bittacle, the stumps of the broken masts, and so forth. The cannons, too, had slid down owing to the incline of the wreck, and did all lie huddled on the lower, or larboard side, and the hatches were mostly open. Wedged in among the cannon were some bones and a skull, so that now I knew that the negro had seen this in his descent, and had thought the black muzzle of the cannon was a porthole.

And now, Woods making to me a sign to follow him and pointing to my air-pipe—which, he had told me before he came down, I must by no means get twisted, or the air would cease—he set his foot upon the after hatch-ladder, and, so, slowly descended, I following. So did we go down to the middle deck, around which were placed the cabins or berths. And now I was to see a sight enough to freeze anyone's blood, even though so old a sailor as myself. For first we went into the main or living cabin, and there we observed what Death had done in its most grisly way. We saw huddled into a corner of it the clothes of a man and woman, within them still their bones, and they were, or had been, locked in each other's arms—the long hair of the woman lying close by the fleshless head. Then did we see in another corner

another woman—her mass of hair pale and golden, like to an Englishwoman's, and in her bony arms she held also some little bones and a skull, which told a sad tale—it was a mother and her poor babe, who had perished together. And, around and about all, there swam and darted away as we drew near hordes of fishes, though 'twas long since they had made a meal of these poor dead things.

But now I could stay no longer, being as yet not used to my strange head-dress of copper, so I made to Woods a sign that I must go above, and so we went forth, and, giving of the signal, were drawn up to the surface again. And once more I breathed the air of Heaven and was very grateful therefore.

Then Phips took both me and Woods aside, asking us what we had found, and we told him—he sighing at the sad news from below—and also did we tell him how, as yet, we had done no more; so says he,

“Well, courage, Nick; when next you go down you shall find better than these poor dead ones—what think you, Woods?”

“I hope so, sir,” says he, “since all around the main cabin are many sleeping ones in which there should be some sort of things of value, and then must we break away the middle-deck to get to the lower, where the plate, if any, should be.”

“If any!” exclaims Phips. “Why, now, I do believe from all reports I got from Cuba years ago, that she is full of it! She was, besides being a galleon, taking home the Adelantado, or Governor, and his family, and also some others. If we find not

a hundred thousand's-worth at least 'twill be little enough good for me."

Woods opened his eyes at this, for tho' all knew we sought for treasure, none knew that she might have so much within her; indeed, none had been told what she might contain. And, now that both ship and tender were apeak over the wreck and nothing could be brought up without being seen by all in them, there was no longer any secret to be made.

Soon again, after we had refreshed ourselves, we were ready once more to go down, and Juan the Black was to go with us, only both I and Woods were ordered by Phips to keep an eye on him. This brute was, as we knew, a Coromantee, and, from all accounts, they are not only the biggest thieves of all the Blacks but very ferocious as well. Moreover, neither the Captain nor I fully believed in his keeping us waiting off Porto only so that he might get drunk, and we knew not if he and the old Portyguese, or he and some other villains, might not have been concocting some precious scheme to defeat us.

But we had no dress for him, only a copper bladder-head, which, however, would do very well, since the creature was ever naked and certainly wanted no garments in which to enter the water, and was so strong that he said the water could not press on him to hurt; and so, taking the longest air-pipes we had for all of us, again down we went, all arriving on the middle deck one following the other—Woods first, I next, and the negro last. As we passed into the main cabin we saw the Black's great copper head bent over to the dead where they lay huddled, and

then suddenly darted back, so we knew—or, at least, I did know—that to his other qualities he added that of fear and timorousness.

And now, seeing that on the bulkheads, or on the cabin doors, could be still read the painted names, such as “Capitan,” “Teniente Po,”* “Pasagero,”† and others, I motioned to Woods to burst open with his axe the captain’s door and let us see what was within. This was soon done, since in nature the woodwork was somewhat rotten, and, moreover, ’twas not fast, and so we entered, or clambered, into it. The bed, or bunk, which was very large and roomy, we could observe, even after the fifty years that had passed, had not been slept in since it was made; therefore we did conclude the captain was above when the ship struck, and so was lost. For the rest there were, all shifted into the corner of the cabin, two great heavy chests clamped with iron, and on them great padlocks, and these we decided must at once go up to the tender. So we lifted them up with much ado and affixed them to the slings, and then they were gotten up.

And now I was becoming so used to my strange habit that, beyond a singing in my ears that went and came, I felt no inconvenience, and was, though not rash, very busy about the main cabin. And in this way I entered into a berth which we made no doubt was that set apart for the Adelantado of Cuba, since all showed it to be so. The swords about the cabin, the rich clothes, though soaked with water, of both a man and a woman proved this to be the case,

* Ist lieutenant.

† Passenger.

as did the great chests that had slipped about the place and the bed. And herein was another terrible and ghastly sight. In that bed lay two human forms, or what had been human forms once, though now but skeletons, the two skulls being side by side, the woman's hair being a great black mass upon the coverlet like a pall. So they had died together, he who had ruled Spain's greatest colony and she who had acted for Spain's Queen. And this was all left of their greatness! Poor things!

But we had to see to the chests and what was therein contained, since doubtless the Governor had much. And since they were bursted open, perhaps by the shock of the ship striking on the reef, we peered therein and saw things enough to make one gasp, even more than I did in my strange head-dress. For, lying in the water of the chests, or leastways of one chest, were golden plates and ewers and candlesticks and sockets, all of them set in with pearls and rubies, and there, too, were caskets, not open, but so firmly fixed and locked that very well might one guess what should be within. Also on this chest—for the others contained, as we could see, but wearing apparel for both of them—were many other choice things, such as comfit boxes, necklaces, the jewel'd orders of the Adelantado, the gems and brilliants of his lady, some jewel'd swords and daggers, and several great bags or sacks full of gold coins.

Verily it was a great sight for us to see—as for the Coromantee, he thrust his helmeted head so far into the chest that we had to draw him back by main force—and I could not but feel joyful that, at last, we

were in a fair way of discovering of all. For it was not to be doubted that on the deck below we should find the silver itself.

But now we were signalled to from above to rejoin the tender, so, sending the black first, since it would never have done to leave him here a minute by himself, and I going up last, we returned back above the sea.

CHAPTER XVI.

AN HONEST MAN ARRIVES.

Now when we got up to the surface again, I taking with me one of the bags of gold coins to show the Captain, we were very much astonished to see that, moored alongside of our ship was another—a small craft such as is known in England as a “snow,” which is generally very fast in sailing, having a main and a foresail, as well as a trysail mast. And as I looked round after getting my head free again, I did see on her stern a great gilt star and the words “*Etoyle, Provydence,*” so now I knew what she was, and, perhaps, whence she came, or at least that she was from one of the Provydences. Leaning over her bows and watching us as we arose—with a twinkle in his eye, which squinted somewhat, when he saw the Coromantee—was a man whom I guessed to be the skipper, a great yellow person with a shock of black curly hair, so that I thought he must be a Mustee, and with a big slash, or scar, all along his face. And leaning over, too, were several others, sailors, all regarding us fixedly. Their eyes were set upon the bag of coins at once with, as I thought, an eager gleam in them, and then their Captain hails me and says:

“What luck below, shipmate?” to which I did but grunt a word, not knowing how things stood as

yet. But now comes forward Phips, who says to him :

“Captain Alderly, this is our first lieutenant, who is in charge of the diving at present;” and then he turns to me and says, “Crafer, our friend has been here before—that is his ship’s boat drawn up on the isle—and he thinks he should have a share of the spoil, since he found the wreck before us—*so he says.*”

“Does he, indeed?” I replied; “’tis strange, then, that he took not away the spoil when he found it;” and I fixed my eye on him to see what he would reply, for since, as I say, we were moored close alongside, every word spoken on one deck could be heard on the other.

“Ay, ay,” says that skipper, “and so I should indeed, and came here hoping to get all. But of what avail is hope? My little snow cannot fight your great vessel of two hundred tons, and we both sail under the English flag. And therefore, since I am an honest man and peaceable, I must, perforce, lose my chance. But your Captain says, sir,” he went on, addressing me, “that I may have a percentum on what I help to bring up, and that must suffice. Yet, ’tis hard on an honest man!”

“Ay,” says Phips, nodding his head, though I did observe him closely and saw that his eyes were ever on the other. “Ay, ’tis hard on an honest man! Yet, Captain Alderly, I think your percentum will pay you very well for your trip from the Bahamas.”

“Not so well as the gross,” replies the other, “but, as I say, it must suffice. Yet ’tis hard. I have brought with me—indeed, went back for him—a

most expert diver, who I thought should have gotten me all, and now he must work for another. 'Tis hard! 'tis hard! Yet an honest man must not repine so long as he can earn his living in these times."

Now, that night when we sat as was our custom taking some drink together, while, since the arrival of our new friend, the watch was doubled, Phips says to me:

"Nick, I do believe that honest man is as big a scoundrel as ever hung at the yard-arm. For, firstly, if he does not come from Provydence in the Gulph of Mexico—which is infested with buccaneers and pirates—instead of Provydence in the Bahamas, I am much mistook, and, secondly, I am certain that he and that infernal blackamoor are known to one another. I have seen already glances between them, and it is my belief that when the negro was drinking, as he said, at Porto, he was devising some scheme with this fellow."

"But," replied I, "even so, what can they do? Naught can come up from the wreck unperceived by us, nor could his diver get down by night without our knowing it. Therefore we are safe."

"Yes," says he, "we are safe so long as we are never caught asleep. Now, as for the diving, what we will do is this. His man shall go always with Woods, and, since you like the office, the Coromantee with you. What say you, Nick?"

"I like it very well," replied I; "or all can go down together. If you are above to see to the hauling up, there can be no picking nor stealing."

So this we agreed upon, and then Phips went on

to tell me of the arrival of the *Etoyle* while I was below. She came, it seemed, round by our little isle, and, on being challenged by Phips as she drew near, hoisted a friendly signal, so was allowed to approach, especially as she flew the English flag. Then the skipper told the Captain that he was extremely distressed to find so large a ship there forestalling him, since, having discovered the reef some months ago, he had gone back to the Bahamas to fetch a diver and to refit, and so on.

"However," says Phips, "I soon gave him to see that, even if he had been here before—which I could not dispute because of the boat at the isle—he had indeed been forestalled and missed his chance. And also I told him that we had been for four years searching for this very wreck, that we held the King's patent for fishing for it, and that we meant in no way to be thwarted or interfered with. For, says I to him, even though we had no papers, but were only pirates or buccaneers, still we would go on with our task and trust to our shotted guns—as they always are now—to help us. So then," continued Phips, "he sees that he has no chance, and asks if he cannot help in the fishing, to which I answered, 'Very willing, if you chose to do so at a fair rate.' And being anxious to get the work done and to get back home, I have given to him the same terms as to Geronimo and his sweet Blackamoor."

"'Tis well, sir," says I, "and now we need fear nought. While, if that negro in any way plays us false, we will shoot him like a dog. Shall we not, Captain?"

"Ay," replies he, "we will, or, since they say the

sharks will not eat black meat, we will make an experiment of him, and see for ourselves."

So now, therefore, when the morning was come all was arranged, and, to commence, down went the three divers, and I along with them. Our plan now was to clear the whole of the middle deck of all in it, and then to break up the top part of the ship sufficient to get down to the lower or orlop deck, where the bullion room of the Spanish ships was ever placed. So we got to work, sending up at once everything found, and a mighty great find it was. All cabins not in use for the officers of the ship were full of passengers away home to their country, and all these were, it was plain to be seen, rich persons. Their bodies were found frequently—all skeletons, like unto the others—and in some cases 'twas strange to see how they strived to preserve what they most esteemed of value. Thus, round one, a female, as again the hair close by denoted, which was red, slightly fleck't with grisel, there was on the bony neck a great rope of diamonds, each as big as a nut, that all sparkled and glistened in the water, and round each wristbone there was the same in bracelets. Poor thing! perhaps she feared to be robbed and so slept thus. Then again, there was a bed, or berth, in another cabin, out of which the body had been cast by the shock and lay in a disjointed mass of bones in the corner, but in the bed itself, under a pillow, we found a great pouch of goat's skin all full of unset diamonds, rubies, and blue stones called sapphires, and also a belt full of great Spanish pieces of gold, weighing five of our elephant guineas each.

And thus we went along, ransacking of every cabin, finding chests here and coffers there, full of precious stones and jewels, with bags of money and skins too, as well as, in several cases, parchment drafts drawn upon the old bank of Barcelona and the Treasury of Castile. Poor creatures! They had taken all thought to get themselves and their monies and valuables home to their land in safety. Yet had they not gotten many score leagues upon their way ere all was lost, life and everything. Nay, had they made straight for Spain, instead of coming on to Hispaniola, as they must have done to be here, they had not been lost at all.

And now we had done with the middle deck, there was nought more to take away; for though there were many rich silks and satins, and so forth, all was spoilt by the water, as was their spirituous liquors and their wines, of which there was a good supply. So, after going above for to refresh ourselves, we were now ready to cut away this deck that we might descend to the place where the plate was.

"'Tis a good find already," said Phips to me, as I sat at meat with him, "a fair good find, Nick; and by the time we have got up the silver we shall well have justified ourselves to our promoters. Of jewels and coin already sent up by you, there are many thousands of pounds' worth—and for the plate it shall bring us well up to the mark."

Then he went on to ask me, "How I found the divers working, and if I saw any sign of anything like treachery upon the part either of the Black or the Provydence diver? And, since I could not say that I

had witnessed aught that appeared to me suspicious, he said he was very glad; and so we fell to it again for the afternoon.

All that time we spent in getting the middle deck cleared away as much as might be, and in removing a great part of her starboard side, especially by her orlop beam. Also we did cut away all her timbers between her lower ports, so as to make a sufficient big opening through which to enter, and removed all between her fourth and second futtock. So that now her stern part, or at least all that below her poop and quarter deck, was open to us and gave great space. And from here we could progress right below her gun deck and waist and get up almost to her main wale, or to where her fore part began to be bruised and smashed on to the reef.

Now, therefore, we had got her bullion room clear of all encumbrances, so that there was nought to do but to burst it open—it being most securely locked with great Spanish locks that looked as though they would defy all attempts except powder to open them. Yet one thing else did we see: namely, that down on the larboard side—which, as I have writ, lay on the bottom—the ship had somewhat bulged forth and some of its treasures come out.

For we could observe great bars of silver lying on the bed of the sea, mostly encrusted with the limestone, yet with some part sticking forth and glistening brightly. One piece alone, a great sow of silver which had fallen from the bursted bullion room, was so heavy that all of our united strengths could not lift it, nor could aught be done until, with their axes,

the divers had broken away its crust accumulated in fifty years.

However, at last we got it fastened to the hauling up lines and it was towed up—not without great fears to us below that it might break away and fall upon us, smashing in our heads—and when it was weighed that night we found it to be of about fifty-six pounds.

And this was the beginning of the fishing up of the plate.

CHAPTER XVII.

AN ALARM FROM THE "FURIE."

Now, it would be useless, as well as tedious to my hand, for me to write down all the little incidents that took place on board our ship day by day, and likewise to keep accounts of every ounce of silver brought up from the rich mine we had discovered. Moreover, I have weighty matters to write about—which shall be the very things to advantage those who come after me when they read this—so at once I begin again.

And, therefore, I now proceed to say that ere we had been many days at our dredging and fishing, it was come to bringing of the silver up by tons, so that, at last, our *Furie* began to sink low in the water until she almost touched the reef herself, and we became obliged to discard all ballast and use the silver in its place! I do not say that tons came up daily—since, indeed, twenty sows of about fifty to fifty-five pounds each was our usual haul, but we reckon'd now by tons. And so well had I made my calculations that I considered there to be in all thirty-two tons of silver, and this was what it eventually turned out to be. Now, since silver was worth in the London market at this time sixty pence an ounce, it was therefore very easy for us to reckon what our find would be worth when we

had got all, exclusive of the jewels, wrought plate, and other things.

So that, as Phips said, we must one way or another take back with us something between one hundred thousand and two hundred thousand pounds' worth.

"Which," says he, "will be very good for all of us, especially for you and me, Nick. Perhaps, indeed, we need never go to sea again, though I think we both love it dearly."

Though that Phips should ever cease from wreck fishing or treasure hunting I could not well believe, seeing that such things were ever in his mind. Even now, when we were doing so wondrous well, and were like to be, perhaps, the most notorious of finders ever known from any sunken ship—as, in truth, we did become—he was always a-pondering over other searches. Thus, he would ever be telling me that, not very far away from here, there had sunk the ship which was taking home Bobadilla, another Adelantado (but of Hispaniola), and that 'twas full of treasure gotten by him. Amongst other things which he said he knew there were, was a solid gold table of three thousand three hundred and ten pounds weight,* and much coin and jewels. And he talked of coming forth from England after he had once gotten this treasure of ours home, and seeking for that. But I told him—for we were now as intimate as brothers—that first let us finish this job, and then time enough to think of others.

* Peter Martyr calls it a solid piece of gold, and says more than a thousand persons had seen and handled it.—J. B.-B.

Now, our next task was to get into the bullion room, and this we did after very considerable difficulties, seeing that those locks of which I spake were so extremely strong; but even they yielded to us at last, and we got to it. And, Lord! what a sight was there! The silver was packed in bars and sows and bags, tons and tons of it, so that verily I did come to think that our ship of two hundred tons would never move again, unless 'twere to sink, and that we should never get all up. Yet, as it did happen, what we found was less than our ballast, which for a two hundred ton ship is usually twenty-five tons of iron and thirty tons of shingle; so in that respect all went very well.

During all this time Alderly had been behaving in such a manner that there was no earthly fault to be found with him, and so, it is but just to say, had our Coromantee. They, the men of Provydence, helped at the hauling with a good will, working hard all day long, and singing cheerfully and pleasantly at night, and Alderly even went so far as to express himself satisfied enough with what was to be his portion, or percentum. For, he said—

"Never did I think there was aught like this in the ship, and, though I do see very well what I have lost, yet also do I see my gain, and shall go back to Nassau a very well satisfied honest man."

And his diver, who was a Bermudan, descended of the early English settlers in that island—which rich Mr. Waller, whom I had often seen about the late King's court, a gentleman and a poet, wrote so much about in its praise—certainly did do his very

best, and so did the negro, both working under Woods. And in this way, though a careful watch was always kept on all that was found below the surface and all that came above, they did so manage to delude us and throw dust into our eyes, that—but this you shall find later. They were villains all, and they deceived us, yet at last a righteous vengeance was had of them. So I go on.

Now it came about at this time that we ran short of fresh water—which in such a tropic place is above all things the first necessity of man—and so it was arranged that I should take the tender and go to our isle in charge of her, leaving Phips to do as he had ever been doing, namely, superintending the bringing up of the plate to the surface. In my place as chief diver, or officer in charge of the divers, there was to go down our bos'un, a worthy, honest man, who could be trusted in all. The tender was—as Heaven would have it, and as 'twas afterwards most providentially proved—a very fast, swift sailer, and was a Dutch galliot that had come to Porto, and had been seized for debt by the man from whom we bought her. Also she was armed, or rather fit to be armed, having cannon-ports in her sides capable of taking small cannon, and, as we never trusted in this region to chance, I took with me four of our little guns, a swivel gun, and, of course, our muskets. As you shall see, 'twas well I did. They were soon to be wanted.

So we parted from our companions, to be gone from them for two or three days at most, yet there were some of us never more to meet in this world.

So I parted from my tried friend and comrade, Phips, thinking that we should sail home together as we had sailed out—yet, alas ! but little more was I to set eyes upon him in this world neither. Both of us were to succeed and prosper—though he to die young—yet were we only to come together once again for a short time. Yet, why digress from my story ? Better to go straightforward and plain, and so make an ending.

We reached our little isle, and rounding the point to get to our old landing place, lost sight of the *Furie*, and, taking the boat after we had anchored her in "Safety Cove," as we called it, all went ashore but two, being right glad to once more step on land for a stretch. We meant that day, by Phips' leave, to take our ease, to lie about, and to gather some of the sweet fruits that therein do grow, and to catch some fish to take back to our comrades. Then, the next day, we did intend to fill up our casks, cut some wood for the cook's galley, and so back. And this we did do, getting yams and shaddocks, and so forth—and catching of many pounds of what in these parts are called mullets, though, indeed, they are full-sized trouts, and many crayfish and some soft-shell'd crabs. So the day went and we lay down to sleep.

And on the next we fished again and gathered more fruits; we filled all our casks and carried them in the boat to the galliot; we cut and corded of the wood, and made all ready for rejoining the *Furie* at day-break, since on that burning sea the first two hours of day are best and coolest. Then the muskettoes are, I think, not awake, the sun is not so fierce as later,

the air is cool and fresh, with generally a soft pleasant wind. So that second night, ere we lay down, we put in all our fruits, our ananas, bananas, toronias, limes, and wild apricots, as well as some wild parrots we had shot, which are sweet and good eating, and then all was done and we distributed ourselves for taking of our rest. Only we set a watch, there being six of us in all, and so broke the night into three, I and a young lad taking the first watch.

'Twas eleven of the clock, as we made it by the nearly full moon, when we were relieved, and all was most calm and peaceful. The birds of the isle were all long since hushed to rest, and even the insects that do here abound disturbed us not. So I and the boy lay ourselves down, and soon we were asleep.

How long I so slept I knew not, yet 'twas not day when I awoke, springing up as did the others, all as though shot, while the watch came running to us. For through the calm night air—or, rather, that of the morning, for the chill told us the dayspring was nigh—there had come the loud booming of a cannon—Once, twice! “What did it mean?” we asked each other, with wonder starting from our fresh opened eyes. “What did it mean?” and then all with one voice we exclaimed, “’Tis from the *Furie!* from the *Furie!*”

So, swift as we could run, down we got to the boat, and so by threes to the galliot—for although we heard no more cannon, we knew that our place was in the ship at such a time—and getting to her and all in at last, we dragged up her anchor, pulled in the boat, and, to the fresh breeze arising with the coming day,

shook out her main, her mizen, and her gaff-main sail. And so out of the cove and away.

And as we did so, up over the trees of the little isle there went from the neighbourhood of where the *Furie* lay two bright blue rockets, which, as Phips and I had agreed upon, should be the signal for our immediate return, as well as to warn us to be ready for danger.

CHAPTER XVIII.

TREACHERY AND FLIGHT.

"WHAT can it mean?" the sailors asked of one another as we got into the open, while, for myself, I was as lost in wonderment as it was possible to be. Naturally, my first thought was that the *Furie* had been attacked by either the Spanish or the French, the first from St. Dominic, or the latter from Aittii. Yet I knew not either how this could be, since the sound we had heard was that of our own cannon, which I knew well enough, we having practised all of them considerably on our voyage out. Moreover, two cannon shots, and that from one side only, do not make a battle, so I was sorely puzzled as I stood at the tiller of the galliot.

Yet when we had rounded the point, 'twas pretty easy to perceive what had happened.

For in the rays of the waning moon we did see that the Provydence ship had got away from the *Furie*, and that, with all her sails filled, she was shaping her course to the south-east. And in another moment also did we see that the Snow's trysail mast was shot away—broken off clean down, leaving but a short stump, and with the sail itself all a-dragging in the water. And now from us, as we headed for the *Furie*, arose a babble of talk and questionings as to what this must mean, while all of

us decided that, at least in some way, these scoundrels had managed to steal some of the sows of silver, or the bars or bags, and to get away from our bark in the night.

But ere long we knew how much far worse than these things were; we knew that we had been robbed of a terrible deal of what was ours. And soon, too, we knew it.

For when our course was still set dead for the *Furie*, we did see coming towards us with great swiftness one of the cotton-wood canoes we had made—under Phips' direction and partly with his own hands—and in it three of our men, who instantly signalled to us that we should come about and pick them up, for, calls out one to me—

“You must away, sir, at once after those villains, and we are to go with you to help. For they have robbed us, the thieves, oh! treacherously! They are, after all, but buccaneers from the Providence in the Gulf.”

So, much startled, we did bring ourselves to, putting our foremast aback, and throwing off a line to the canoe, and so had them all soon aboard, and then, losing no time, away after the *Snow* we went, while from the *Furie* we saw Phips standing on the poop a-waving of his hands as though in encouragement or farewell, and from her there did come a ringing English cheer.

And now we were to hear a story indeed of treachery unequalled, of villainy extreme. For it appeared, as I did gather from our bos'un, who had come to join us with the other two, that these scoundrels

had all along been a-planning of their scheme; and thus it happened.

After we had sailed for the isle, it seems that the bullion room was rapidly emptied of the plate, so that, at last, there was gotten up thirty-two tons in all, and then 'twas perceived that below the sows and bars there was still much else, so that the place was a very treasure-hold of wealth. For there were more bags of gold pieces and more of silver, which were at once took up into the *Furie*—and then underneath them there were two chests marked with the names of the Adelantado and of his wife. And feeling sure, as they did, that herein must be great wealth, the curiosity of the bos'un—as, wringing his hands, he did tell me—was too great for him, and so, not being a discreet man, which neither was Woods, they opened of the chests and saw in them a startling sight. For there, free now from the layers in which once they had without doubt been enveloped, they did perceive jewels of all kinds, pearls, diamonds, the blue sapphires, and much else. Then alarmed at having so looked, they decided that they must not tell the Captain of their curiosity, for fear of punishment. And neither did they tell him (which, if done, might have saved all that followed) that both the Black and the Provydence diver had seen anything. So, saying only to Phips that such chests were down there, they said no more, and arrangements were made that on the morrow all should be brought up. And this, 'twas thought, should finish off the fishing, and soon we should be ready for home. But alas! how far off from that were we now.

Therefore, since the plate was being got up on the first day we were away in the tender, which was the galliot, and also on the second, it came to be that the chests of which I speak were but discovered too late that second day to be brought up. Now, on that night the watch forward was kept by the negro, Juan, and the after-watch by a sailor, who was a dull-pated, heavy fellow, of little use in a ship at any time and one who ought never to have been with us. And, as it was discovered later, Juan had been plying this man with drink which he had concealed, so that on his watch—as though his stupidity was not enough—the fellow was flustered and sleepy.

At midnight Phips went to his cabin all being well, and the master's mate came forth to take his place—and, terrible to relate, from that time never was he heard of nor seen again. The bos'un who told me all this said he thought either that the Coromantee murdered him, or that one of the crew from the *Etoyle* got aboard and did do that office; but, any way, he disappeared. Perhaps he was first stunned and then given to the sharks. Who knows?—leastways, there was no sign of blood.

Then, next, it would seem that from the far side of the *Etoyle* the diver of that ship must have been most quietly lowered into the water, must have passed under our forefoot—I mean of the *Furie*—and thence to the bullion room of the wreck, and so fastened the lines to the chests that, with his own help below, they could easily get them up to the *Etoyle*.

And then, when this was done, there was but to get up sail as quick as possible, and away. And that

was not so hard of accomplishing as a sailor might think. For, firstly, the *Etoyle* was not anchored, but moored and made fast to the *Furie*, so that, while all were asleep below, and while the master mate was murdered and gone, the after-watch drunk and stupid, and the fore-watch a traitor and conspirator, that Snow might very easily be unmoored. Therefore, it was but to get up the sails and catch the fast rising morning breeze, and so off and away. Moreover, so deeply was the plot laid, that, as 'twas found shortly, the door of the captain's cabin was made fast from the outside, the ladder was set loose of the main hatch, so that, when the men came tumbling up, it shifted, and they came tumbling down instead, and two of the cannon's touch-holes were spiked. Yet, whoever was the wretch who did all this, still was he a fool likewise, since in his haste he had not spiked the cannon that gave on the bow from which the *Etoyle* must move, but on the other.

But now, as they brailed up their sails they could not disguise the noise they made, and in a moment Phips heard them, being ever on the alert, and was at his door, sword in one hand and pistol in the other, to get out. And, said the bos'un to me, his cries were terrifying to hear when he did discover how he was trapped. First he smashed with his fists a panel, all the while he was roaring for his men to come and set him free, and also for his poor dead master's mate, and then he flung himself against the door with such fury that it gave way, and out he came.

"He look't, sir," said the bos'un to me, as he told all this while we were tearing through the water after

the buccaneers, who I did see sorrowfully were gaining on us, "he look't like a demoniac. And when he saw that the *Etoyle* was already under weigh, his rage was such as mortal man might indeed fear to see."

It appeared from this man's account that Phips in his madness discharged his pistol at Alderly, who was on the poop, and miss't him, whereupon Alderly returned his fire, missing also ; that next the captain called for the gunner, who could not get his linstock ready all at once, and by this time the sails of the *Etoyle* had caught the breeze and she was under weigh.

"Haste! haste! man," cries Phips to the gunner, now running with his light, and snatching it from his hand applies it to the breech himself, doing no harm with his shot; and then the gunner, having trained the next gun better on to the fugitives, they did hit their trysail. This impeded them somewhat, though not sufficient to prevent them getting away.

And then, the bos'un went on to tell me, Phips roared for the watch, calling them, as was his wont in an emergency, dogs and traitors, and soon learnt that the poor master's mate was slaughtered, or, at least, had disappeared.

"And," went on our informant, "then we all trembled. For while the tears sprang to his eyes, which in an instant he dashed away, he said also, in now a very low voice which seem'd mighty ominous, 'And the other watch? The fore and aft watch. Where are they? Bring them to me.'"

Then, with a howl, the Coromantee sprang forward

—wringing his hands, imploring pardon, saying he too had been deceived by Alderly, who had drugged him.

“Ay!” says Phips, between his teeth, while as he spake he shook the powder into the pan of his pistol—“Ay! no doubt. Deceived by Alderly, because he got away and left you behind for me to slay you.”

“No, no!” yelled the brute. “No, no! Signor Capitan. No, Signor Phips, no slay me!” and he clutched, said the bos’un, at Phips’ legs and tried to seize his pistol hand.

“Ay, but I will, though,” said Phips. “No man betrays me twice;” whereupon he drew back from the howling wretch, and seizing his wool by one hand blew out his brains with the other, so that the deck was all bespattered with them.

“Fling him over,” said Phips, “and swab up the mess, and now bring forth the other. Meanwhile, where is Crafer with the tender? She should be round the point by now.”

Then they brought forth that other poor crazed traitor—weeping and sobbing with despair, and shrieking as he saw the great negro’s dead body—and to him strides Phips, his sword in hand.

“You dog,” says he, “you have betrayed us too. So must you die also. They say you drank with the Coromantee and slept on your watch. Therefore, to the yard-arm with him.”

Midst his shrieks and howls they dragged him away, calling on his mother’s name, which softened Phips so much that, the bos’un said, he seemed at

one time like to spare him, only he remembered all he had been robbed of. And then, ere the man was executed, the boat was lowered that was to bring them to us in the galliot, and so they came away.

“And,” said Phips to the bos’un, “tell Mr. Crafer that so long as his galliot will swim, so long as there is a man left alive in it, so long as he can sail, fight, or move, he is to follow those buccaneers—even though it be into their stronghold. And while there is one of you left alive, that one is to attempt it, and is to get back the stolen treasure. And then, when that is done, the rendezvous shall be Portsmouth town, to which those of you who live must find your way back somehow. Now go; do your duty, commend me to Nicholas Crafer and tell him to do his. And more, say that at the sign of the ‘Navy Tavern’ I will leave word for him or he for me—whoever by God’s grace reaches there first. And reach it I pray we all may do.”

Such was the message brought to me, this the duty I had to perform, this the errand on which now we sped. Ahead of us, and still gaining on us, went the *Snow, Etoile*, with the buccaneering thieves on board, and with them a fourth of our treasure; behind us slowly faded into dimness the reef and the *Furie* moored fast to it. That Phips himself would have given chase had he been able, was certain—only, before he could have got under weigh the buccaneers would have been out of sight. For nought was ready, the plate was not bestowed away, the sails were unbent and all in disorder.

So, instead, ’twas I got the commission to chase

those thieves, to follow them to their lair, and to wrench back from them the stolen goods. And as the galliot danced along, following the course they had betaken—which was now set due east, so that I could not but think they did mean to 'bout ship shortly and run for Porto Rico, or, perhaps, one of the Virgin Isles—I took a solemn and a fervent oath that never would I fail in my endeavour while life lasted to me. If I could catch and defeat those thieves, I swore to do it, and so upon that I set myself to see to the arrangements necessary in our small craft, and to make all ready for what might be before us.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE "HONEST MAN" IN HIS TRUE COLOURS.

Now, as I have said, we were—with the coming of the bos'un and the other two—nine hands in all, there having been six of us who did go to the little isle in the galliot for wood and water.

Therefore my first disposition was to arrange ourselves into regular watches, which was easy enough to do, since three men at any time awake were sufficient to keep the look-out, to attend to the craft, and so forth. Then next there was the provisioning to be done. Now for this there was little to disturb ourselves about, since we had all our island provisions of the fruits, the fish, and the parrots.

That they should continue their course due east, as it was now set, was not to be considered, since that way they could encounter no refuge until they came to the Guinea Coast or, at best, the Cape de Verd Islands. Such, it is true, was no great run for the *Snow*, provided she was well enough provisioned and watered—as might or not be, for all we knew—but still 'twas not very like to be the ease. The Virgin Islands in the Antilles, most of them little better than Keys, which are small sandy spots appearing above the surf of the water, with only a few weeds and bushes a-growing on them, and abounding with turtle, appeared to my mind to be far more their mark. Most of them are uninhabited, and one or

two there are which are large and even rocky and craggy, but, in general, as I have said.

Now, there is no Key, at the present time wherein I set down this recital, which is not the haunt and hiding place of innumerable pirates and thieves, and also used as a burying place for their stolen riches, and here it was most like that Alderly would retreat with what he had gotten. The ships of war of any countries can scarce chase them here, the lagoons, harbours, and inlets all about offering to the smaller craft a natural security, and, if the villains are encountered, their one excuse always is that they are a-turtling: viz., catching of the turtle for sale in the larger islands.

So, pondering thus, I did begin to take my decision, and counsel also with those under me. For says I to the bos'un—

“That they should make for Africa is not to be thought on. Why should they do so, when all around are innumerable refuges? ‘Therefore, Cromby’—which was the bos’un’s name—“do you know what I will do?”

Cromby replied—“No, he could not tell, but of one thing I might be sure: namely, that there wasn’t an honest heart in the galliot that wasn’t with me body and bones”; whereon I unfolded my idea.

“My lads,” says I, “we’re alone, nine of us, and we’ve got to do one of two things. Either catch the *Etoyle* and make her surrender, or meet her and fight her until one of us is sunk. Now, listen. Catch her we never shall; she sails three feet to our two; she’s hull down now—where do you think she’ll be at daybreak to morrow?”

"On the road to Cape Blanco," replied one, "across the water."

"Take a turn north in the night," said Cromby, "slip past Abreojo and Turk's Island, and so for East Florida, or, p'raps, Cuba. I doubt their touching an English island."

"So do I," I answered; "yet I think you're wrong. The wind sets fair south, therefore 'tisn't likely they'll try for the north; and as for a cruise for Cape Blanco, I scarce believe they've either food or water enough. They borrowed three barrels the day before we went to our isle—like enough to provide for this jaunt! No, my lads, south is their course, and the Virgin Isles or Porto Rico their aim. Now, we shall lose 'em when dark comes on—there'll be no lights on that piratical bark!—but by the blessing of God we'll find 'em again, and it will be somewhere between Tortola and Porto Rico's north-east coast that we shall pick 'em up again, or I'm a Dutchman."

And now, since the sooner they were out of sight of us, and we of them, the better—which was nigh on being the case already, so much had they got the foot of us—we slackened our gaff main sail so as to fall off still more, and gradually we lost sight of them altogether.

"So," says I, mighty glad to think such was the case, and knowing well that though Phips said I was to *follow* the buccaneers, he would approve of my plans if he knew that following was an impossibility, "put her head due south, and let's see what comes of it."

And thus, that night, just as the sun set, we were

off the northernmost of the islands; we could see Anegada right ahead of us, and St. Thomas too. We had arrived at the spot where I hoped, ere many hours were past, we should meet with the villains again. It began to blow boisterous, however, now, so that we were bound to keep well out to sea, not knowing what dangers we might encounter if we proceeded farther. And if there was wanted aught else to make this a dangerous chase on which we were engaged, it was that—even to help us in fine weather—we had no instruments whatever in our possession. No, not so much as a quadrant, a chart, nor even a Waggoner, though we had a meridian compass. We had no thought of nautical instruments when we left the *Furie* for the island; above all, we had no thought of setting out upon such a cruise as this, to end the Lord knows where. Indeed, when it came to our getting back to England at some future time—if ever!—we should have to do it by running down, or rather up, the parallels, and then make direct casting for home. That would be our only likelihood, so far as we could now see, of striking soundings again in our old channel.

“’Tis indeed getting dirty above us, sir,” said Israel Cromby to me, pointing upwards; “I misdoubt me much of what is coming. And the current sets in towards the islands. What must we do?”

“Best run out a bit, so as, at least, not to be dashed on shore. There is a good moon, which will give some light.”

’Tis true there was a moon, yet so obscured by the storm that now set upon us that it was but little

good except when seen through a rift in the clouds for a moment, but soon lost again. Then down from the north there came howling a most fearful tropic gale, beginning first of all in fitful gusts, so that we were obliged to haul in all our sails and send under bare poles—knowing not where we were going, but dreading every moment to be dashed on to either a rocky bound island or a sandy Key. In God's mercy, however, it seemed that at this moment the wind did shift, so that very soon we could perceive we were not being driven towards the land, but providentially away from it, whereby if our little galliot would but live we might still weather the storm.

Over her bows the sea was now coming in in great quantities, so that we were baling with the canvas buckets we possessed, while another precaution most necessary was that our powder should be kept dry. If that was spoiled, then indeed we should be at the mercy of the pirates if we encountered them.

At this moment there did come a lull, the clouds broke, and through them the moon shot down a clear bright ray on the waters so troubled beneath it, and as we tossed up and down, Israel Cromby whispered to me—

"Look, look! sir, on our larboard bow"—which was the direction I was not gazing in then—"look, not two cables' length off. There are the villains!"

Look I did, and there was the Snow, as he had said, riding up and down on the crest of the waves, one time up above us and towering over, another time wallowing down in the trough of the sea, with us above.

They had seen us as soon as we them ; and Alderly, standing forward, was regarding of us fixedly.

He shouted forth something which 'twas impossible to hear in the turmoil of the lapping, swirling waters, while as the Snow sunk and we rose in those troubled waves it seemed as if he shook his fists at us.

"He is, I think, a devil," said Cromby to me. "Look, sir, what he is a-doing now !"

I did look, and as still we rose and fell upon the troubled waves, I saw that he was holding up with both hands a casket that looked very heavy, and shaking it before our eyes, as though to tantalize us with the sight of the stolen goods. And, meanwhile, laughing and gibbering on the deck like so many fiends, as I have heard such creatures called, the other villains in the Snow were a-stamping and dancing round him as the vessel rolled and lolloped about in the tumbling waves.

"Heavens and earth !" I exclaimed, "why, they are all mad with the drink ! See to those fellows holding the bottles to their mouths. What a time to be fuddling themselves, when their ship wants all the knowledge a seaman possesses !"

Even as I spoke we saw a great wave come along aft of them, break over the stern of the Snow and then wash right over the decks, knocking the men down like ten-pins and driving the craft onwards with a boust, and, as it did so, a new fear sprang to my breast. In their drunken state 'twas great odds that ere long they would go to the bottom, and their master whom they served so well, the Devil, would

have them, which was no great matter to us; but what was worse was, the stolen treasure would go too.

"We must catch holt of them somehow," said I. "Oh that the waves would bring us together, that we might grapple and board. Yet, what chance is there? The wave that rolls us towards them rolls them away from us. What shall we do?"

"To board them, sir," said one of the men, "would be fatal to the treasure. As 'tis, they would throw it overboard. See, sir, what the madman is doing again."

The sea was calming as he spoke, so that we now got uninterrupted views of each other, and then to our affright we did see Alderly fastening of a cord to the rough-tree-rail at one end, and at the other round the casket, and then lowering it over the side till it swung three feet from the top of the waves, which sometimes, as they burst against the Snow, hurled the box backwards and forwards like unto a shuttlecock. Then, next, he drew his knife, and making signs to us of what he would do by laying of the blade on the cord, he stood by defiantly regarding us. Also the drunken scoundrel and fool had made up his mind to defy us to the utmost and to be plain with us, as it was very evident to see. He had run up his colours, so that there should be no doubt left in our minds about him; on his mizen peak there flew a black silk flag, with on it a skeleton, or "death," with cross bones in one hand, and in the other a heart with drops of blood dripping from it, and also a jack of the same, with a man having a sword thrust through

his body, as later I saw plainly. So he stood proclaimed a pirate.

But what was, perhaps, more truly a sign of what this reckless creature was in reality, was the fact that—doubtless before the storm came on—he had abandoned the work-a-day dress of the “honest man” which he wore when first he came alongside of the *Furie*, and was now bedizened in a lot of finery, none the better for the assaults of the winds and waves. He was dressed in a rich blue damask waistcoat and breeches, in his hat a feather dyed red; around his neck was coiled half a dozen times a gold chain with a great diamond cross on to it—perhaps he had stolen it from the wreck!—hanging over his shoulders was a silk sling, with, thrust into it, three pistols on each side. All this we saw afterwards more plainly than now.

“I cannot endure this defiance,” said I to Cromby; “let him sink his casket and be damned to him! I have been a King’s officer, and will never submit to the insults of a blackguard scoundrelly pirate. Up with the mainsail, my lads, haul away, and at him;” and as I spoke I whipped out my pistol, and, sighting him, fired.

That I miss’t him was none too strange, seeing how both of us were tumbling about and rolling in the water, no more than that he miss’t me, as, pulling two pistols out of his sash, he fired, one in each hand.

Then, when he saw our mainsail go up, he made as though he would cut the cord to which hung the casket—only a moment afterwards he altered his mind, and bellowing of an order, which we could very well hear, since now the waves and winds had

abated, soon had his own sail up; and in a moment his ship had caught the wind and was away.

That we should ever have caught them sufficient to come alongside and board, I cannot think, even under the best of circumstances, but this chance was not to be ours, for our ropes had fouled, so that they could not be run, and ere we could get them disentangled, the *Etoyle* was well off from us. But since again, with the coming of fairer weather, the wind had northed, we could very well see they were running for the south. They *were* bound for the islands!

But at last we got our ropes free, and away we went too. The morn was breaking now and the waves abating, so that, though still we tossed up and down, we could see their horrid black silk flag a-flying on the mizen peak whenever we rose to the crest; and, with the white spume of the water dashed in our faces, and reckless now of what might happen so that we did but keep them in sight, we set all our galliot's sails—main, mizen, and gaff main sail—and tore after them.

"We will follow them, my lads," I said now, with my blood up to boiling heat; "we will follow them to the death! There shall be but one crew left alive to tell this story."

And as I spake my men gave three hearty cheers.

So, having got thus far in my account, I will now rest again for a while.

CHAPTER XX.

A FIGHT.

Now I go on to narrate the tracking of those thieves and pirates, and of what thereby followed.

By mid-day we were off the islands, with the chase well ahead of us—yet not so far neither as she had been, since we had sailed faster than she this time, in consequence, as we soon learnt, of their having snapped their foremast—and with Negada, or the Drowned Island, so called because 'tis frequently submerged by the tide, lying not a league away.

"I have been here before," says Cromby, "and I doubt their getting ashore. All around lie sand-banks and shoals that require careful navigation. If they run in here we shall fight 'em when we are both aground."

"Then I do pray they will," says I. "It will be best to land, and no chance of escape for either. 'Twill suit us, my lads."

^ The men answered cheerfully. "So 'twould, and very well!" yet as they so spake we saw that Alderly meant not to enter there.

Then said I, "If it be not here, p'raps 'tis Virgin-Gorda they are for, or Anguilla"—for I, too, had been here before—"yet, 'tis not very like. There are colonists here, and have been since Charles's day."

But another hour showed us that neither were

these islands their aim, but, instead, a little long tract of land that, among all the others, is not marked on the chart, but is known among mariners by the name of "Coffin Island," because of its shape. Now, Coffin Island hath on it a mountain, not so very high, yet near to the beach, being inland about a quarter of a mile, and from the mountain's base there runneth down a wood to the sea, with, in it, a channel or river.

This we learnt shortly, though 'tis fitting enough I set it down here.

And now 'twas very plain that 'twas for this channel the desperadoes were making. With our perspective glasses we could see—as we passed the before-mentioned isles—that they were heading straight for that inlet; we could indeed perceive them get to its mouth, haul down all but their trysail, and so into the river, which was broad enough to let in a bigger ship than theirs.

"After them we go," I exclaimed, "though they have all the best of it. Yet"—with a moment's reflection—"it may not be so, neither. If they get ashore, maybe they cannot take their cannon; if they stay on board, we are as good as they. How is our powder?"

The men answered the powder was very well. They had carefully kept it all dry, so that we should not lack that. Therefore I gave them orders to carefully prime and load our pieces: namely, the four little guns and the swivel, and also the muskets. And so we, too, stood for the channel.

As we neared it we could very well see up it

somewhat, and did notice that the *Etoyle* had come to a halt. She was not anchored, but had drifted a little down again towards the mouth of the inlet, and thus she was as we passed in, the woods growing thick on either side. And now was the time when we saw the finery in which Alderly had arrayed himself. He, as we ran in, was standing by the bows of his ship, and had in his hand a glass of liquor, and, as we drew close, he shouted—

“Trapped! Trapped, by God! You will never get out of this! You cannot escape!”

“You beastly pirate!” I called back; “there is no thought of getting out. We are only most thankful to have got in. Now, will you haul down those vile rags at your peak, and give up the stolen goods and surrender, or——”

“Surrender!” shouts he. “Yes, I will surrender! Like this!” and stooping down behind his bows for a moment, he picks up what was a new-fangled sort of grenadoe—being a case bottle filled with powder and pieces of lead, iron slugs and shot, with a quick match in the mouth of it—and flings it aboard us. But in a minute one of my men, a lusty youth from North Berwick, named Fernon, stoops down, seizes on it, and flings it back into Alderly’s ship, where it exploded amidst their yells and curses.

“Now,” said I, as at this moment our crafts touched, so that the whole channel was blocked, “over their bows, under the smoke, and among ’em. Pistols and cutlashes, my lads, will do the business.”

So over we did go, and soon found that we had a

tough job before us. For though the men of the *Etoyle* did only outnumber us by five—namely, four men and Alderly—we discovered ere long on what a dreadful mine we were standing

As I cut down one man, giving him a wound in the neck that nearly sever'd his throat as clean as if he had cut it with a razor, Cromby whispered in my ear—

“Sir, what shall we do? Down below stands a great negro over two barrels of powder, with a lighted slow match in his hand. 'Tis evident the instant we are victorious he will blow up the Snow.”

The sweat sprang out all over me as he said this, and, fighting hand to hand all as I was with now another pirate, I had to pause and deliberate. Then I said—

“If you cannot shoot him we must get back to our own vessel. Try if you can get a ball into him.”

And now I came against Alderly and rushed at him, when I saw him settle himself against the tackle of a gun, his hand over his heart.

“So,” I thought to myself, “he has got his death wound. He will fall dead in a moment. Let us see for ourselves.”

Amidst the smoke, therefore, and firing some shots below into the hold in the hopes of slaying the negro, we leapt back into our galliot, and then, before the crew of the *Etoyle* knew what we were at, we had pushed ourselves off of them, and, catching a little of the current of the canal or river, got drifted down some fifty yards. And here, being safe from any explosion should it take place among the others, we

gave them a broadside from our guns almost before they could know we had left them.

But they answered not. We heard our balls crash into the sides of the *Snow*, we heard her timbers splitting and bursting, we even heard the shivering of a mast or yard, and its fall on the deck—but no reply was made. No ball came back crashing into us, no report echoed ours. All was still.

“Let the smoke clear off,” I said, “ere we fire again. Meanwhile, keep your guns loaded. Can it be that all are slain?”

The smoke did evaporate shortly, and then we learnt that 'twas as we thought. Either the pirates were all slain or—fled. We had won our day. From our rattlins, by running up a dozen, I could see on to the deck of the *Etoyle*, and perceive men lying about dead. Also, too, could observe the deck stained with blood, the fallen mast bearing the vile silken flag a-lying across one man—it having smashed his head in as it fell. But though I gazed at the gun tackle where I had seen Alderly, he was not there now, neither near it nor by it. Had he therefore escaped?

“We must board the *Etoyle* again,” says I; “yet since the negro with his lighted match may still be by the powder, I will go alone first, as is my duty. Lower the boat.”

Since I had regained our tender I had been standing enrapt, gazing with all my might at the smoke first, and then up into the shrouds again at the enemy, taking no heed of my own craft. But now, as no one stirred, to my hearing, to obey my orders, I turned

round sharply to chide them, but as I did so I started and felt myself go pale.

"Good God!" I exclaimed, "good God! What is this?"

There were but three men, I recollected in an instant, that had leaped back into the galliot from the Snow, and those three men were here in the ship behind me. But, alas! two were now dead; the third, Israel Cromby, was a-lying on his back, gasping out his last few breaths.

"Oh!" says I, "oh! my poor men—this is a sorry sight for any commander to see. Cromby, man, it is ill with you, I fear?"

He opened his eyes, all covered with a film like a poor partridge a gunner has knocked over, and then he whispered—

"Sir, sir. There is a poor old woman down Rotherhithe way—she is—my mother. She—drawed—my money—tell her—she has no other means whereby to live—if you—get back, see to—. Sir, I've done my duty."

So he died and joined the others, and went his way to meet his God.

And I was left alone.

From the *Etoyle* there came no sound, nor from the woods neither did any come. So I told myself this would not do. I must be stirring. Thinking which, I lowered down the boat, having to shift the bodies of my poor dead men to get at the tackle, and then got down into it, and so to the *Etoyle*. It was no use wasting time when I got to it, I reflected; if any were alive of the enemy they must be encountered

soon or late—as well now as then. And the negro I did feel sure was dead. Otherwise, he would have blowed up the *Snow* or else come forth.

Making fast the boat, I clambered up over the side of the buccaneer's craft, and then I saw pretty quick all that had happened, looking first to see for the negro. He was done for, as I had imagined, and was lying flat on his back at the foot of the hatchway, his match burnt out in his dead black hand, which, I saw later, had been singed and scorched by the flames; yet that hand had been perilously near to the powder-barrels while the slow match lasted, as it lay all stretched out.

On the deck they laid about, my men and Alderly's, as they had fallen, and I did perceive that our broad-side had finished up one or two at least of the latter, who were still breathing when I got aboard, though not long after. Of my six men who had fallen there, I made instantly a burial, tying shots to them and heaving them over the side—for I would not have the birds of prey—many of whom were hovering about the banks of the river—tear and devour them. This I did do when I felt sure they were indeed dead, but of the pirates I took no heed—the birds might have their bodies (as I doubted not the Devil had got their souls by now), for all I cared.

One thing—or rather two—I did not find which I would very willingly have done. There was no sign anywhere of either Alderly or the casket he had flourished in our faces. Now, if Alderly had died before his men, or some of them, this would not be strange, since I knew—having hunted pirates before

to-day—that the captains had ever the desire to be flung overboard the moment they were dead, and always in their finery and adornments.

And this doubtless had happened to him; that is, if he had not escaped, which was, of course, possible for him to have done if he had not his death wound when I encountered him. And the casket might have gone too—though this I doubted; at least, it would not go while one man remained alive, and he would not sink it until his last gasp, at which time he might be then too feeble so to do.

Yet I resolved to search the Snow, to see if any were lurking about, or if the casket was hid anywhere. 'Twould not take long to do, and even though it did, what matter? There was no call on my time.

Down below, to which I went after carefully scrutinizing the deck, all was in great disorder; weapons were lying on the cabin table alongside of food and victuals, and there was a broached barrel of rumbullion—or kill-devil—a-standing in the middle of the cabin, with a scooper, or long-handled ladle, hard by, which doubtless they had drunk from by turns; and since they were drunk when we met 'em in the night, I supposed they had been drinking ever since they had deserted us. Leastways, the barrel was half empty, yet none was spilled.

Here was the body of a man shot into the head, and very ghastly—I doubted not he had fallen down the hatch when struck, or, may be, run down for drink to ease him. And now, seeing this corpse set me off a-calculating how many there had been in the

Etoyle, and how many there were now—whereby I should get the difference of those in the ship, and those who had been flung, or fallen over, or—if it might be so—escaped. And, at last, I did arrive at the solution that but two were missing; namely, the villain Alderly and his diver. Therefore, even allowing them to be alive, all but three of both crafts had been killed in the fight.

And if those two had escaped it must be by having leaped overboard in the smoke and confusion—'twas certain they had not taken their boat, for it still lay along their deck, upside down, where they always kept it, as I had seen often when they were moored alongside the *Furie*. Now it had a shot in it from one of our guns, I did perceive, which was perhaps the reason it was not used—though their haste to get away was more like to be the cause. Yet, I pondered, if they had hastened away, where was then the treasure? The casket alone would almost, I should judge, sink a man who endeavoured to get ashore with it, though it was but a few yards to swim—how could it be, therefore, that they and their stolen prize had got away? The truth, I did conceive now, was that all, Alderly, diver, and treasure, were at the bottom of the river.

But by this time the night was approaching, vastly different from the former one, it being calm and cloudless; and I was worn out with want of rest, and with the fighting and excitement. So I resolved I would take a night's repose, and then in the morning I would explore the island carefully—'twould not take long, being not a league in length nor half

as broad, as I knew ; above all, I would see if I could find the goods you wot of. As for the two pirates, I feared them not one atom ; face to face, I deemed myself—a king's late officer—the match for any two dirty pirates that ever breathed.

So I let go the *Etoyle's* anchor and made her fast for the night, and then rowed me back to my galliot and prepared for my rest.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE VILLAIN'S DEN.

'TWAS as I have writ, a night vastly different from the precedent one, beautifully calm in this little channel, or river, with the moon arising behind the wood that bordered its eastern bank, and with a cool breeze coming from the sea and rustling through the leaves. And as the moon rose above the tree-tops she flooded all the river with light, making a great shadow of the *Etoyle* on the water, and also of the galliot.

I lay me down upon the deck of my craft wrapped in a boat-cloak, as soon as I had gotten things a little ship-shape for the night (I had anchored the galliot before I went off to the Snow), but sleep came not easily. There were, indeed, many things a-running through my brain. Firstly, there were my poor dead sailors sleeping below in the water—probably already food for the great variegated crabs that do here abound—whom I could not but lament, and especially Israel Cromby, with his dying thoughts of the poor old dependent mother at Rotherhithe. Then there was the position to be thought of in which I now stood. I had the galliot to get me away in, 'twas true, to the adjacent islands, some of which were inhabited by my own countrymen, and not far off neither—but, supposing I got back the

treasure from the pirates, should I ever get it safe home to England? I knew not, as yet, how much it was; whether the casket was all or only a portion; whether also that portion was a huge mass of gold or silver, or a small one of jewels. Above all, should I get it in any form or shape whatever? Was it buried in the river ere the last of the pirates died, or were those two men alive, and had they got ashore and buried it there? Still my fatigues were such that, in spite of all my conflicting and unhappy thoughts, I slumbered at last. Long and peacefully I slept aboard the little craft, which had none other now but myself for its inhabitant, with the cool night wind blowing all over me, and freshening me as I lay.

Yet I awoke ere daylight had come—startled by something, I knew not what!

The moon was at her full height now, the channel was as light as day, 'twas that, I thought to myself, had waked me; and I turned over on my side to sleep again. Yet, as I dozed, and should soon have been gone again, once more I was disturbed. "Perhaps 'tis a beast," thought I, "in the wood, crashing through the undergrowth,"—for such I fancied to be the sound—"perhaps 'tis—" but here I ended my speculations, for I saw what had aroused me.

'Twas the two villains, Alderly and his diver, a-standing on the bank of the river gazing into it. 'Twas their steps I had heard crunching on the underbrush.

Now it did so happen that our galliot had a cabin aft, with, cut into it on either side of the sternpost,

two port-holes, so that, lying here, I could very well see through those scuttles what they were a-doing without their seeing me. Whether they thought I was not in my vessel I could not guess; or whether they knew I was, having watched me all the latter part of the day from the wood, but deemed me now asleep, 'twas impossible for me to tell—yet doubtless 'twas the latter, since they seemed wary in their movements.

Yet was it obvious to me, watching them as I did, that both were still under the influence of the drink; as they stood gazing into the water, first one would give a lurch, then the other, or one would hiccough, and the other would curse him under his breath for making of a noise; and once the diver—whose name I knew not—nearly fell forward into the river, and would have done so, had not Alderly clutched him and hauled him back. And all the time the moon enabled me to see the latter's tawdry finery, all smirched with dirt, with powder and filth, and his broken feather in his hat, and the stains and grime about him, while, as for the other, he had nought but the coarsest of apparel upon him.

Now, seeing they were still drunk, I did begin to think they had a resort of some sort in this isle, perhaps comrades upon it from whom they could get drink, since 'twas hours since they had had any in the Snow. Which led me to reflect that, if there were more of these wretches here, my case was a bad one. However, watching of their actions drove these reflections from out my head, for a time at least.

Presently, one, Alderly, stoops him down, going on to his hands and knees and, baring his arm up to the shoulder, thrusts it into the water, and begins moving it backwards and forwards as though feeling for something in it. And shortly he found what he wanted, for he lifted up a stone as big as my head, with round it a rope that ran on, into, and under the water as he lifted of it up. This was easy to perceive, for the drops of water sparkled on it like diamonds as he held it at his end.

“Ha!” thinks I to myself. “I do guess what’s at t’other end now. Well, well, we will see.” Yet, as I so thought, I looked to my priming. I thought it would not be very long ere I should have to shoot these two ruffians, and take my chance of there being more of the same sort on the isle. But the time had not come yet, I did perceive, and meanwhile I lay perfectly snug watching their doings.

A moment after Alderly had gotten the stone and rope up, he threw away the former, and began, with his comrade’s assistance, hauling and tugging at it, and presently they got ashore from under the water a long box of about four feet—though ’twas not what I expected to see, namely, the casket. This, I made sure, would have been fished up, but ’twas not. I never did see it again.

’Twas plain to observe there was no more to come, for no sooner was this box up than they made as though they would depart, Alderly letting the rope drop back gently into the water; and then, as I could see by his gestures, making signs to the diver to pick the box up and carry it. But this led to an argument

between them; I could observe them shrugging of their shoulders with a drunken gravity, lurching about now and again as they did so, and stumbling against the box more than once; and then, suddenly, I perceived Alderly strike the other in the mouth and knock him down.

"Now," thinks I, "this leads to more things. If they go on like this, there will be only one pirate soon for me to contend with, so far as I know."

Even as I pondered, my words came true. The diver got up, whips out a long knife, and made a rush at the other—the weapon sparkling as though it was dipped in phosphorus in the rays of the moon—and in another moment they had closed together.

But Alderly was the best man of the two—which was perhaps why he was chief of the *Etoyle*—and ere long he had hold of the other's wrist with one hand and had got him round the body with the other. Then, by degrees, he did bring the body down until it lay across his own knee, face upwards, and having, as I did see, the strength of a bullock, or a vice, he forced the other's arm up and down, directing so his clenched hand that he compelled him to plunge his own dagger into his own breast. Once, twice, thrice, he did it!—the diver screaming with the first plunge of the knife into his bosom, groaning with the second, and with the third making no noise. Then Alderly lets go the diver's fist from out of his own, and frees his own body from his grasp, and down the diver fell to the brink of the river.

"You slew yourself," says he, looking down at him; "'twas your own knife that did it, your own hand

that plunged it in." And here he laughed, an awful, blood-curdling laugh. The laugh of a maniac or a fiend! Then he put his foot to the dead man's body and tumbled it over into the river, so that I saw it no more. Next, seizing on to the long box—and nearly falling over it as he did so in his half-drunkenness—he lifted it on to his shoulder and went into the wood. Only, as he departed I saw him also lift up his foot and touch his shoe with his finger, and hold that finger up in the moon to look at; and then he gave again that awful laugh. He was a-laughing at the dead man's blood in which he had trampled!

"Now," says I, "is my time; I will find out if he can also slay me. At any rate he shall not escape without doing so," and with these words I lowered the boat again, got into it and went ashore—the distance from the galliot being not twenty yards. And then, securing of the boat to the trunk of a small tree by the river's brink, I plunged in after him to the wood. Only, you may be sure, I had my pistols with me and my sword.

At first the little wood was so dark that I could not see, or scarce see, the moon a-shining dimly through the thickness—a thickness all made of wild orange, citron, and pomegranate trees, as well as of campeachy trees, and mountain cabbage palms. Yet soon this wood opened out somewhat; there rose before my eyes a little glade, on which the moon did here shine as though on a sweet English field at home, and, reaching this, I perceived by stopping and looking carefully that my man had

passed this way. The long grass was all trodden down—nay, so much so, that the two must have also come this way when they set out as comrades—and, since the imprints of the foot-steps were most uneven and without regularity, I felt sure my drunken pirate had struggled and staggered along this track.

So across the little glade I went, following ever the irregular crushings down of the grass, until I came to where it was bordered by more thick underbrush and shrub, and then, even had I doubted I was on the steps of Alderly, I could do so no longer. For now through that thick brushwood and tangled growth of briar, and lacery of trailing things, there was crushed aside a most distinct opening through which a man, or men, must have passed, while, had I desired further proofs of where the man had gone whom I sought, it was before me. Lying on the brushwood, caught off and torn by a thorn, was the broken end of Alderly's red feather, the piece that had hung down over his savage face as he forced the diver to slay himself, and that gave, even in that awful moment, an appearance to him of almost comicality. A comicality, though, to cause a shudder!

Now did I, therefore, loosen my blade in its sheath and set my pistols in my belt carefully, for, since by this time I had gone a mile at least, 'twas not very like I should go much farther before coming on to the desperado, unless he should have turned off at an angle—a thing I could not judge he should have any reason to do. And so I went on very carefully,

keeping ever a watch about and around me, so that I should fall into no trap.

Soon, however, I did perceive that the path turned, as I guessed it might perhaps do, and I thought the time was not yet come for me to get up with my chase, when, to my astonishment—in spite of my former ideas that there might be other buccaneers upon this isle—there came to me the sounds of singing and revelling, of shouting and whooping and drinking of healths, and clapping of canikins or glasses on a table.

"The health," I heard a voice shout, "of Winstanley, the diver of Liverpool, the man who strove to contend with Alderly. His health in the place where he is gone, and another to his taker off!" And then there followed the banging and smashing of drinking vessels on the table again, and huzzas and shriekings.

Next uprose a voice a-trolling of a song.

"When money's plenty, boys, we drink
To drown our troubles, oh-oh!
Carouse, revél, and never think,
Upon the morrow, oh-oh!"

"When money's plenty," I heard Alderly repeat. "When money's plenty! Why, and so it is, my blithe lads. Look here in this box, my hearties. Here's enough and to spare for all. Diamonds, sapphires, pearls, gold and silver. Ha! ha! Drink, my lads. Give me the bowl. Peter Hynde, my lad, drink up, and you, Robert Birtson, and Will Magnus, you, and you, Petty, and Crow, and Moody, and fat John Coleman. Drink, you dogs, I say, drink."

"I have landed on a nest of them!" thinks I to myself. "A dozen at least, I believe. Well, I will lie hid awhile, and if they o'ermaster me, why—"

"When money's plenty, boys, we drink!
And bring the girls along, oh!
Of blood we've shed we never think,
Midst dance and jocund song, oh!"

burst out the ruffian again. Then he yelled out, "A toast! a toast! The health of Phips and that accursed Crafer, whose blood I've drunk," at which I started. "So," thinks I, "he deems me dead. 'Tis perhaps best. Yet shall he learn," I muttered twixt my set lips, "that in spite of him and his horde I am alive—he shall—"

"And Bess, my Coromandel girl, bring in the meats!" the villain now shouted. "Ha! ha! here she comes with the steaming turtle! Fall to, my boys, fall to; and here comes our Queen of Port Royal, our golden-haired Barbara who loves us well. My lads! a health to the girl of Port Royal!"

And again there came the banging on the table of fists, then cans, and the voice of Alderly whooping and shouting.

"I must see this crew," I whispered to myself, "e'en though I die for it. I must see these ruffians in their den with their loathsome womankind. I have four shots in my belt, and a good sword. All must be drunk and *I* am sober! I will do some execution amongst them."

So through the brushwood I went a pace or so, parting the leaves as gently as might be—though that

I should be heard there was no fear amidst the infernal clamour and din and shouting of Alderly.

Then, next, I saw before me a hut, or big cabin, built of logs, with a wide, open door and thatched with palm leaves; from out the door there gleamed the light of a lamp, and as I parted some boughs and bushes to get me a view, I could see very well into the hut.

And this is what I witnessed.

CHAPTER XXII.

MAD!

INSIDE the hut ran a long table on trestles; upon that table were platters and drinking vessels; on it also were some dried fruits, some pieces of dirty, coarse bread, and also some scraps of jerked beef, or, as 'tis called here in the Caribbee-Indian, Boucan; and that, with the exception of some drink in a tub, was all!

There was no steaming turtle or other savoury viands, neither were there any women, golden-haired or others, nor a nest of pirates. Besides Alderly himself, there was in the hut no living soul that I could see. He was alone!

Yet, in front of the table, there lay something on which my eyes could not but fasten, the long box, in which I did believe the stolen treasure was. And also by its side were three bags, or sacks, bulging out full of coin—I could see the impress made upon the canvas by the pieces within—and these I did guess had never come out of the wreck we had been fishing on. They were, I thought—and found afterwards that my thoughts were right—spoils from some others than us. The plunder of another foray!

But at the time I could do nought but watch the great villain, the creature whom I could not deem aught but mad, or, at least, mad from the drink.

His eyes glistening and rolling like a maniac's, he sat in the middle of the table, gibbering and grimacing to either side of him, as if the companions he had named were there; now shouting out a toast, then banging on the table with both his fists, then seizing a can or mug in each of them; next calling out in a deep voice "huzza, huzza," and then altering it to the shrill one of a woman doing the same thing.

Next, he would seize the scooper of the liquor tub, and, with clumsy bows to the empty chairs or stools, for such indeed they were, would fill the glasses standing on the table in front of those chairs, though they being already full he did but pour liquor upon liquor until the whole table streamed with it. Then, for variety, he would tear with his fingers a piece of Boucan off, and with solemn gravity lay it on some tin plates near him, saying to the vacant space behind the plate:

"Barbara, my sweet, 'tis the choicest piece of the haunch; I beseech of you to taste a little more"; or, "Coleman, my fat buck, take a bit more of your own kind," and so forth. Or he would crumble off a bit of his dirty, frowsy bread, and, with his filthy hands putting of it in his mouth, would say, "The turtles' eggs are at their best now. 'Tis the season. Ha! They are succulent!" Then he would drink a deep draught of the spirits by him, call a toast, and begin his bawlings and clappings again.

To see the ruffian sitting there in the half-dim light—for his lamp was none of the best—grimacing and gibbering to vacancy, and addressing people who

existed not, was to me a truly awful, nay, a blood-creeping sight! For now I knew what I had before me. I knew that this pirate, this man, whose hands still reeked with the blood of his comrade—one of those whom he had but recently called on them to drink a toast to—was mad with long-continued drinking and p'raps scarce any food since they left the reef; that, indeed, he had the horrors, called by the learned, the "Delirium."

Still, all was not yet at its worst, as I found out and you shall see.

Meanwhile, amidst his bellowings and howlings, which I need not again write down, since they varied not, I pondered on what I must do. I had the fellow caged now; if he attempted to come out of the hut I was resolved to shoot him down or run him through as I would a mad dog; indeed, any way, I was determined now to be his executioner. He was a pirate, a thief who had caused us of the *Furie* much trouble and loss of good life—and here I thought of Israel Cromby and my other poor men, all dead!—also he was a secret murderer. He must die by my hand—but it must not be now when he was mad. I was ordained to be his executioner, I felt, but I would not be a secret murderer myself also. No! not unless I was forced to it.

But, still, I decided now to advance in upon him—the position I was in was cramped and painful; the hut would be better than this, with now many night dews arising from the soil and enveloping of me, and—if the worst came to the worst—I would knock him on the head and secure him. Also, I remembered, I

had the treasure to secure. So I moved into the path, rounded it, and, pistol in hand, advanced towards the door of the hut, and, standing in it, regarded him fixedly.

At first he saw me not. The light was growing dimmer, so that to me he looked more like the dull, cloudy spectre of a man than a man itself as he sat there—perhaps, too, I, with nought behind me but the dark night, may have looked the same to him. Then, as he still sat talking to an imaginary figure behind him, his conversation running on the drinking and carousing he and his supposed comrade had once evidently had on the coast of Guinea, I said, clearly though low—

“Alderly, you seem gay to-night, and entertain good company.”

In truth, there was no intention in my heart to banter the man or jest with such a brute, only I had to let him know of my presenee there, and one way seemed to me as good as another.

Instead of starting up, as I had thought he might do, and, perhaps, discharging a pistol at me, he turned his head towards the door, put that head between his two hands, and peered between them towards where I stood.

“Who is’t?” he asked. “I cannot see you. Is it Martin come back from the isles with the sloop?”

This gave me an idea that there were some comrades expected—perhaps from some other villainies! but I had just now no time for pondering on such things, so I replied:

“No, ’tis not Martin. But, ‘Captain’ Alderly, you

should know me; you drank a health to me not long ago. I am Lieutenant Crafer of the *Furie*."

"I do not know you," he replied; "I never heard of you. Yet you must be dry in the throat. Come in and drink."

In other circumstances I might have thought this to be a ruse—now I could not deem it such. Beyond all doubt he was mad—my only wonder was that such a desperado should not be more ferocious. Perhaps, however, this might be to come.

I sat me down opposite to him and regarded him fixedly in that gloomy light, and it seemed as though I brought by my presence some glimmer of reason to the wandering brain.

"Crafer!" he exclaimed. "Ah yes, Crafer! Drink, Crafer, drink. So thou hast join'd us. 'Tis well, and better than serving Phips. We have more wealth here than ever Phips dreamed of—if we could but get it away. Away! Yes! away! What might we not do if we could but get it to England! We might all be gallant, topping gentlemen with coaches and horses, and a good house, and see *ridottos* and—but stay, Crafer, you must know my friends." And here the creature stood upon his feet—I standing, too, not knowing but what he was going to spring at me, though he had no such intention—and began naming his phantom friends to me and presenting them, so to speak.

"This," says he, "is Peter Hynde, a gay boy and a good sailor. Also he is our musicianer of nights—he singeth too a sweet song. Stand up, Hynde, and make your service. And this is Will Magnus, with a

good heart, but ever lacking money till he joined us. A brave lad! 'Tis he who has cut many a throat! Barbara, my dear, throw thy golden mane back and kiss the brave gentleman—she was but a child, sir, when we found her, yet now, now, she—Ha! again that wound! How the thrust of the steel bites!”

He sank back into his chair, and tore at his damask waistcoat and then at his ruffled shirt—yellow with dirt and spilt drink, and dabbled with thick blood-stains—and so, opening of his bosom, there I did see a great gash just over the heart, in his left pap.

And I wondered not now that he was mad with the drink and the fever of his wound; the wonder was more that he was not quite dead.

He sat a-gazing at this, with his eyes turned down upon it, and muttered,

“One gave it me as from that accursed galliot, as they boarded. It seemed I had gotten my death. Ah! how it burns, how it throbs! Barbara! Black Bess! hast thou no styptic for stopping of this flux, no balm for this pain? Ha! No? Then give me drink, drink; 'tis the best consoler of all, the best slayer of pain.” And here he seized his ladle, filled a glass from the tub, and drained it at a gulp. Then he wandered on again: “Barbara, get you up to the chirurgeon at Kingston; tell him I am sore wounded.”

“Jamaica is far away from here,” I said to him. “Barbara will scarce bring you aught from the pharmacie there to-night.” Then, bending forward to him across the table, I said, “Alderly, you are wounded to the death; that stab and your drinkings

have brought you to the end, or nearly so. Tell me truly, did this," and I kicked the box at my feet, "and these bags of coin come from the plate-ship? Tell me!"

He peered at me through the deepening gloom made by the expiring lamp, as though his senses were returning and he knew me, and muttered:

"More—more—than the plate-ship—this is a treasure house—" and then, suddenly, he stopped and, pointing a shaking finger over my head, stared as one who saw a sight to blast him, and whispered in a voice of horror:

"Look! look! behind you. God! I stabbed him thrice. Yet now he is come back. See him, look to him at the open door. 'Tis Winstanley, the diver of Liverpool. Ah! take those eyes away from me—away—away! 'Twas your hand did it, not mine," and with a shriek the wretch buried his head in his own hands.

That the murdered diver was not there I did know very well, yet the ravings of the man, the melancholy of the hut in the wood, the dimness of the lamp, all made my very flesh to creep, and instinctively I did cast my eye over my shoulder, seeing, as was certain, nought but the moon's flood pouring in at the door. Yet I shivered as with a palsy, for though no ghost was there all around me was ghostly, horrible!

With a yell Alderly sprang to his feet a moment after he had sunk his head in his hands; his looks were worse now than before, his madness stronger upon him; great flecks of foam upon his lips, and from his wound the blood trickling anew.

"Away! away!" he shouted. Then moaned. "Those eyes! those eyes! They scorch my very soul. Away!" And he cowered and shrank, but a minute later seemed to have recovered his old ferocity. "Begone!" he now commanded the spectre of his distorted vision. "Begone!" and with that he rushed forward, forgetting in his madness the table was betwixt him and his fears, and knocking it over in the rush.

And with it the lamp went too. Only fortunately it was at its end, there was no longer any oil in it—otherwise the hut would have been burnt to the ground.

But all was now darkness save for the moonlight on the floor within and on the brushwood without, and, as Alderly recovered himself from his entanglement with the fallen table and trestles, I could see it shining upon his glaring, savage eyes. And he took me—I having been knocked to the door by the crash—for the ghost of the diver, the spirit he feared so much.

"Peace, you fool!" I exclaimed, "there is no spirit here, nought worse than yourself. And stand back, or, by the God above, I will blow your frenzied brains out," and as I spoke, I drew a pistol, cocked it and covered him.

With a howl he came at me, missing my fire in his onward rush, dashing the pistol from my hand with a madman's force, and, seizing me round the waist, endeavoured to throw me to the earth. Yet, though I had no frenzy, I too was strong, and I wrestled with him, so that about the hut we went,

knocking over first the tub of liquor with which the place became drenched, and falling at last together on the ground. And all this time, Alderly was cursing and howling, sometimes even biting at me, and tearing my flesh with his teeth, especially about the hands, and gripping my throat with his own strong hands—made doubly strong because of his frenzy. I smelt his hot, stinking, spirit-sodden breath all over me; I could even smell the filth of his body as he hissed out :

“I ever hated you, Winstanley; I hated you when I made your own hands slay you. I hated you in life, I hate you now in death. And as I slew you in life, again will I slay you in death.”

Then at this moment he gave a yell of triumph. His hand had encountered the hilt of my sword, and drawing it forth from its broken sheath, he shortened it to plunge it into my breast.

But as he did so I got one of my hands released. I felt for my other pistol, I cocked it with my thumb, when, ere I could fire, the cutlash dropped from Alderly's hand and he sprang to his feet, his hands upon his wound.

“See,” he whispered now, “there be two Winstanleys: one here—one coming through the wood. Are there any more—?”

Staggering, he stood glaring forth into the wood through the open door, seeing another spectre, as he thought, there; then slowly he sank to the ground, letting his hands fall away from the gash in his breast, from which the tide now ran swiftly.

“Oh, agony! agony!” he moaned. “Can one live

and feel such pain as this. Nay! this is death. Barbara, draw near me. Listen. This hut is full of spoil—beneath—none know but I—all mine—now all yours. The other is buried—elsewhere—Oh! God—the agony! Barbara—rich—rich—for life—lady—fortune—give me drink—drink—” Then once more singing in a broken voice,

“ When money’s—plenty—boys—we drink
To drown—”

he fell back moaning again.
And so he died.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE TREASURE HOUSE.

So now I was the last of all left who had come away from the *Furie*. Neither of my crew nor of this dead ruffian's was there any one to tell the tale but I. A strange ending indeed to such a flight and such a chase.

The dead pirate lay upon his back, the blood from his wound trickling down to mix with the spirit from the overturned cask. The box of treasure lay at my feet, and, if his dying words were true and not spoken in his madness, beneath my feet was a vast treasure.

But ere I thought of that, there were many other things to do. Firstly, and before all, there was rest to be obtained. I had scarcely had any for three days—namely, none in the galliot since we were awaked in our little isle near the reef by the firing of the *Furie's* guns; and but an hour or so only before the murder of Winstanley, the diver. That was all, and now I could scarcely move for fatigue. I must sleep e'en though I died for it. Only where should I obtain it? Accustomed as I was to rough surroundings, to fightings and slaughter after many years of a sailor's life, this hut with its loathsome dead inhabitant and owner was too horrible and disgusting for me to find rest in it. I could not sleep there! Yet again, neither would I go far away. "The hut," the

dying villain had said, "was a treasure house"; he had told the imaginary Barbara—who was she, I wondered, who seemed to have been the centre of such tragedies?—that she was the heiress to great wealth contained within it, or beneath it; I must guard that hut with my life. Especially, I reflected, must I do so since he had thought me to be "Martin come back from the isles with the sloop." If, therefore, this was not also part of his ravings, he was expecting some such person, doubtless a brother pirate—at any moment I might have to defend the place against another ship's crew of scoundrels.

Yet I must sleep. I could do nought until I had rested, but I knew that when such a rest had been obtained, I should feel strong enough to, or at least endeavour to, hold my own. I must sleep!

At last I made up my mind what I would do. The door of the hut, I had learned by my mode of progression, faced to the west, therefore I would close the door, lay myself along outside it, so that the morning sun, now near at hand as I guessed, should not disturb me, and thereby get rest as well as being a guard over the "treasure house." So, loading and priming my pistols carefully—as well as two of Alderly's which I took off his body, and which, in his madness, he had without doubt forgotten he possessed—and placing my cutlash by my side, I once more lay down to sleep.

Undisturbed, I must have enjoyed some hours' repose, for when I awoke the daylight was all around me; the wood outside was bathed in the rich sunshine, though I was sheltered from the rays by the hut; the

tiny hum-birds were darting in and out of the many flowers about, thrusting their long bills in them to lick up the honey and the insects; 'twas a sweet spot. Yet, when I arose to enter the hut, all the beauty of the morning and of Nature did seem to me blackened and fouled by that abode.

"Now," I said to myself, "what shall I do?" And instantly I resolved that I would, to begin, make an end of Alderly's carcass. So, having perceived a mattock and spade a-lying in the corner of the place—"perhaps," thinks I, "'twas with them he did bury his treasures"—I stooped down to drag him forth into the copse where I could dig a grave for him. Then, as I bent over him, I saw sparkling in his breast the diamond cross attached to the chain which he wore in many folds round his neck.

I took it off him, and rubbing it and the gold chain clean from his blood, did go to the door to look at it—flashing it about to observe the sparkles of the great gems, holding it out into a dark place the better for to see it by contrast, and so on, as I had seen those do who call themselves judges of such things—which I, a poor sailor officer, could not be. And then I observed there was engraved on the back of the gold-setting some words, which I deciphered to be :

"Mary Roase, Baroness of Whitfields, from her husband, Bevill. Anno Dom. 1598."

"Well," thinks I, "this at least can scarce be from our Spanish wreck. Mary Rose is English enough, we have had ships so named. I dare say the villain pillaged that from some descendant of the lady. If

ever I get home I will see if there is any Lord or Lady of Whitefields now."

Then I went forth to dig the grave, which I did three feet deep, not far off the hut, and lugging out the body—after I had still more carefully searched the clothes, and finding a few gold pieces consisting of some Elephant guineas, two or three French and Spanish pieces, and also some ducatoons, all in a bag—soon buried him. This done I went back to the hut, though by now I was hunger-stung and could very well have ate some food. Though this was not to be yet, since I must go to the galliot to find any, his being filthy. But of drink there was a plenty—a sweet rill of cool water running hard by. There was, indeed, another tub unbroached in the corner of the place, but I cared not to drink of the ruffian's provision; why, I know not, since I did not disdain to take his jewels and money. Yet so it was, and I left it alone, drinking only of the water and laving myself in it. "And now for the long box," I said; "let us see what they have robbed us of." For that the box contained what they had gotten up from our wreck I did never doubt. Yet, as you shall see, I was mistaken. I do not now believe, nor did I shortly then, that what that box contained had ever been any portion of our stolen treasure.

I burst it open very easy with the mattock and there I found a rich harvest; so that, indeed, the hut was a treasure house when only it had that box within. Now, this is what I did find, and the list which I here give you (with the valuations against the items by him) is a just and fair copy of that which I did show

to Mr. Wargrave, the jeweller and goldsmith of Cornhill (now retired very rich), when I had gotten home again :—

<i>List with Mr. Wargrave, his valuation.</i>		Gs.
Two small bags of pearls, weighing with other pearls therein under fifteen grains, as I judged from others shown me by Mr. W.	1,250	
One great pearl wrapped in a piece of damask brocade, six-eighths of an inch in its diameter, as I did measure.	2,000	
Another, the size of a pigeon's egg, full of most lustrous sheen, wrapped in a piece of deer-skin	3,000	
A little bag of sapphires, nine in all	315	
Some Turkish pieces of gold about the size and weight of our shillings, twenty-one in all. These I put in my pocket and did sell afterwards in Portsmouth for	14	
Some silver pieces, too cumbersome to carry and left with other things, perhaps	5	
A little bar of gold	80	
Two pistols beautifully inlaid and chased with silver, having engraved thereon the name "Marquis de Pontvismes," and date 1589	30	
A portrait of a girl done as a medallion, with blue eyes, red gold hair, and a sweet mouth; perhaps this was Barbara! No value for selling.		
A child's coral; also a child's shoes; also a lock of long hair, wheat coloured, wrapped in silk. No value for selling.		
And a dagger set with little diamonds and rubies, the blade rusted very much	50	
		<hr/>
		6,744

I pondered much over these things, for, as I have

writ, I am very sure they never came out of the sunken galleon. There was no sign of wet having got near unto the box or its contents, which must have been the case had it been fished up from that wreck, and therefore I thought to myself, this has perhaps been stolen on some cruise they were upon between the time they left their boat at our little isle and then came back to the reef, thinking not to find us, or any, there. Yet this would not do, neither, for their *Snow* was no fighting ship—not, I mean, a ship fit to attack another carrying treasure, which would be extremely well armed—and she had *not* fought till we got at her in the river. That I knew from the wounds and damage, when I boarded and searched her, being quite fresh and made by us.

Nor, again, could I deem this box to have been the proceeds of a recent thieving expedition or attack on some sea-coast town or place, for there were not enough men in the *Etoyle* to have adventured such a thing. They might have attacked a lonely house, or, as the Spaniards call it, a *villa*, in one of the many islands of this Caribbean sea, or on the main land of Terra Firma, yet this I also doubted, for the contents of the box pointed a different way. The girl in the medallion looked English by her hair, eyes, and colour; the pistols were a Frenchman's. Moreover, the box, the lid of which was all covered with beads pasted on to its lid and worked in many forms of flowers, was likewise English (my mother had just such an one), and to prove for certain 'twas so, inside the lid was the name of the workman who made it, "Bird, Falmouth." So at last my conclusion was this, viz., that Alderly

valued the box for some reason of his own, perhaps desired always to have some goods with him that at any crisis he could transform into money, and therefore carried it about with him wherever he went. I never learned that this was so, no more than that it was not so, and now I quitted thinking how it came to be with him. Perhaps I judged right, perhaps wrong. But of one thing I am very sure, he had none of our treasure with him. The casket which did doubtless contain that treasure, which must have been of precious stones alone judging by its size, was of a certainty dropped overboard either before we beat them, or at the last moment of defeat. At least, I never did see any of the treasure, though in going to find it I found a greater. But this you will read ere I conclude, as I hope soon to do. I am coming anigh the end.

Thinking that "Martin with the sloop," or some other wretches, might be returning, I next proceeded to bury for a time the box, which I did by taking it out into the copse and dropping it into a great hollow cotton-wood tree growing near, which I marked well in my mind's eye. Then, next, I set off down to the galliot, for now I wanted food so badly that I could no longer go without it. I had but little fear of any getting up to the hut unbeknown to me, since, with a seaman's ideas to help me, I concluded that the canal, or channel, or river, as, indeed, it was, offered the only safe inlet to Coffin Island. So if they came they must come the way I was a-going, when I could know it and either avoid or encounter them as seemed best.

However, I met none on my way down, and found both the *Ettoyle* and my ship just as I had left them, and the boat tied to the tree, also as I had left it. Then I went aboard the galliot, and finding some food and drink, set to work to stay my cravings. There was none too much, I found, to last long, though as the men had cooked the fish and birds they were still fresh enough. Also there was flour, and bread already made, and some peas, while, for the water, it was nearly all there. The fruit was quite rotten and not to be eaten, but this mattered not at all, since, on Coffin Island, I had perceived several kinds growing with profusion, amongst others many prickly pears.

And now, as I made my meal, I marked out in my mind what I should do to draw matters to a conclusion. And this I decided on.

"It is a treasure house," Alderly had said of his hut, therefore, firstly, I had got to explore that house, hoping to find therein as much if not more than we had been robbed of. Then when Phips and I met again, as I hoped we might, he should decide about that treasure, and what was to be done with it. But first to find it. Yet, even as I thought this there came to me another reflection—viz., that I could not carry it away with me. The galliot would take me to a neighbouring island inhabited by my own people, but an officer alone in such a vessel, with no hands to work it but himself, must necessarily lead to much talk and the asking of many questions—how many more would be asked if that officer were accompanied by boxes and chests of great weight? Therefore, that would never do! I must get away alone, leaving the

treasure—if I found any more than I had already gotten—somewhere secure, and then I must come back again for it, properly fitted out. Or, if I could reach Phips ere he quitted the reef, we could come back together in the *Furie*, take off the goods and so home with no need for further voyagings out and in.

And, on still reflecting, this was what I had a mind to do. The reef was not a long way off; a day and night would take me there, with a favourable wind. Only I must provision the galliot somehow; I must not go to sea thus; but then I remembered, this was easily to be done if I swallowed my squeamishness. The *Etoyle* was full of food and drink—the former coarse but life-sustaining—if I took that as I took its owner's hordes, then I could get away.

Only, first I had to find the treasure, then dispose of it safely. After that I might go at once. Indeed, if fortune still kept with me, as she had ever done of late, I might be away from this island within another thirty hours.

And so thinking, I finished my repast and set about what I had to do.

CHAPTER XXIV.

WHAT WAS IN THE TREASURE HOUSE.

Now, the first thing was for me to get into the *Etoyle*, and bring a fair provision of food and drink, and then, I thought, I would sink her, or, at least, would get her ready for sinking, so that she, at any rate, should never go on any more evil cruises. This was, however, to be done later.

I went aboard her, therefore, directly I had made my meal, and brought off from her some Boucan, about ten pounds; some dried neats', or deer, tongues, a good amount of powdered chocolate, and some boxes of sweetmeats—the villains seeming to have a dainty taste!—and also I brought away some bottles of Calcavella, a Portygee sweet wine, and a small barrel of rum. And also did I take away some cakes of bread, now very hard and stale, but which, by damping with fresh water and then placing in the sun, became once more eatable. Likewise I provided myself with some of their powder and bullets, not knowing what use I might yet have for such things on the island, or when I was away to sea again.

This *Etoyle* was indeed a strangely laden bark, full of the most varied things the minds of men could well conceive, and had it been possible—which 'twas not, being without assistance—I would have had her taken to one of the West Indy Isles, and her contents

there sold. She had in her, to wit, elephants' teeth and tusks, and some gold dust—though not much of any, neither—which spoke to me clearly of some robbings on the Guinea Coast, also some fine English cloths, silk druggets and hollands, many packs of whole suits of clothes for wearing; some mantuas, a box of lace, another of ribands (again I thought of the mysterious Barbara!), pieces of fine silk duroys and some Norwich stuffs, as well as vast masses of tobacco. Indeed, I thought, this Snow might have visited half the world for her cargo—had I not very well known, or guessed, that 'twas all stolen out of various other ships.

It took me some time shifting all that was necessary for my forthcoming voyage—leaving, you may be sure, much behind in the *Etoyle*—and then lading myself with some provisions for the hut, I prepared to depart back to it.

Yet now more counsel came to me. Supposing, thinks I, that while I am away at the hut, Martin with his sloop, or some similar villains, should come into the river! Why! they would at once see all! The *Etoyle* they would perceive a battered craft—and doubtless they knew her very well—and they would see the strange galliot. This would not do, therefore I must devise some means if I could, not only to remove all marks of our fray, but, if it might be so, to prevent anyone entering the river at all. Then, at last, I decided what I would do.

First of all I took the galliot down out of the river to the sea, and, with a light sail up, I got her to a little cove a third of a league away from the mouth,

in which I moored her; and this cove had such projecting spurs that none passing outside would be very like to see her. Indeed, one would have to pass close by the opening of it to do so at all. Then, getting to the boat again, I rowed me back to the river. Next I brought down the *Snow* to the mouth, moored her fast across it, it being not more than forty to fifty yards at the opening and about fifteen fathoms deep, as I did plumb, and going below I bored a many holes in her sides and bottom so that she began to fill at once, and in half an hour I, who was a-watching from my boat, saw her settling down so that, at last, there was no more of her above water, her masts, as I have writ, being shot away.

“Now,” says I, “if Martin and his sloop come in and draw much water, ’tis almost a certainty that they shall go foul of some part of the fabric, which may do me a very good turn—if not, then must I take my chance against them,” with which I again prepared for the hut.

That day I did very little work, though so great was my desire to dig into and find the contents of the “treasure house” that I could scarce take my necessary rest. Yet I mastered myself so much that I forced myself to sleep, determining to work at night when it was cool. So I lay me down on the east side of the place this time, the sun having by now gotten to the west, and slept well, awaking not until night was at hand.

Now, amidst all my precautions, ’twas strange to think I had forgotten one thing. I had made no provision for any light at night. The lamp knocked

over by the dying pirate was still there where it had fallen, 'tis true, but the oil was all spilled and I could find no other, search as I might. Yet I felt convinced there must be oil somewhere, if I could but discover it. 'Twas not to be conceived that Alderly and the diver had this lamp with them when they plunged into the river to escape from the *Etoyle*; therefore, if I sought, surely I should find.

Yet how to seek! The tropic darkness came on with swiftness, in a few minutes the hut was as black as a pocket; and the moon would not rise for some hours yet! Well! there was no hope for it, I reflected; this night at least must be wasted, and so I made up my mind to pass it as best I might. Though my reflections and memories of the previous night's scene, of Alderly's drunken howls, singings, and toasts, of the spectre his maddened brain had conjured up, and of his horrid death, helped me not at all. I saw him over and over again sitting at the table, filling the cans with liquor for his imaginary guests, talking to Barbara, shivering at the supposed ghost of Winstanley, fighting with me—dying. And at last I got the creeps, I started at any twig that snapped outside or the cry of a night bird, and, springing up, I went forth and plunged into the thickness, where I walked about till daybreak. And in that walk I explored the whole of Coffin Island very nigh, and saw under the moon, when she had risen, that beyond the river there was no other entrance to it. Nearly all around elsewhere were craggy cliffs to make landing almost impossible, saving only one strip of beach.

Away on Tortola and Negada I saw once or twice lights burning, and wondered what the inhabitants of those isles thought of their precious neighbours in this one—I wondered, too, if they knew or dreamed of what Coffin Island contained! And thus the night passed away, the day-spring came, and I went back to the “treasure house.”

“Was it to prove such to me?” I asked myself as I made a meal off some of the provisions I had brought along with me. “Was it to prove such?”

The question was soon answered, as you, my unknown heir, shall now see.

The floor of the hut was a mass of filth that had not been disturbed for some time, and to this had been added now the spilled liquor from the tub that Alderly had flung over in his mad convulsions, as well as some of his blood where he had fallen last. This, therefore, with the previous dirt, I set to clear away with the spade, after I had removed the overturned table, the stool, and other things. And the task was not long. Ere I had been cleaning the floor ten minutes, I came upon an iron ring—set into a trap-door, immediately under where Alderly’s chair had been placed. It was not—I mean the trap-door—very far below the surface, not indeed more than three inches, and, even as I tugged and tugged at it, I could not but ponder over the little pains taken to conceal such a hiding place. And I did wonder if, when the villain was away on some of his cruises, he had not many a fear as to whether his store was not being rifled.

However, this was no time for such wonderments

and speculations, actions were now all, and so again I heaved at the door. It would not lift, however, for all my pullings, so I cleared away still more earth, doing so especially round where it fitted into a frame, and at last prised it right up with the mattock. And you may be sure with what eagerness I gazed into the opening.

First of all I saw that as yet I had not reached the treasure, for although the trap was no larger than to admit a man's body, there were still below it some rude steps down into the earth, which opened up at the bottom of them into what seemed to be a passage. And when I got down to the bottom of those steps, I saw very well that there was a passage, or, indeed, a room cut into the earth; a place about six feet long and five feet deep, being more like a little cabin than aught else.

And now I knew that I had got to what I sought; the treasure was here.

There stood on the floor, and piled up one above the other, four chests, or coffers, the very workmanship of which told me they must be old. Certainly, they had not been made in these days or anywheres near them. They seemed to be of oak full of little wormholes, much carved and designed, and with inscriptions on them in, I think, Latin, of which I understood not one word. Moreover, they had great solid locks to them as well as padlocks, but these had long since been burst open, the reason whereof 'twas not very hard to seek out. I guessed that those who took them from their rightful owners could not perhaps find the keys, and so blew them or forced them thus open.

I lifted the lid of the nearest and peered in, and there the first object to meet my eyes was a grinning skull, the bone severed right across the head as though with a lusty sword cut.

"Well!" thinks I to myself, as I looked on this poor remnant of mortality, "well! you are indeed a strange warden of what may be herein. Yet, p'raps not so strange either if all accounts of piratical doings be true." For when I was but a lad in Oliver's service, and a-chasing the rovers not so very far from this spot where I now was, 'twas always said that they would slay a man and bury him over their hidden treasure, so that he or his ghost should frighten away others who would meddle with it. And so it might have been here, for, thinks I, "perhaps as I go on I shall find other parts of a dead man in the other chests."

Now, although 'twas daylight above, 'twas almost dark in this vault or passage, small as it was, so that I shifted the first coffer nearer to the bottom of the steps, so as to get a full light upon it from above, and then I went on with my hunt, putting the death's head away for a while. Beneath him, as he had lain a-top, was what I took to be a piece of yellow canvas, as so it was, though on looking closer I saw that either dyed into it, or cunningly interwoven, were some flowers like our irises, and some words all over it faint with age, of which I could distinguish but the letters "ance" and "smes." Then, when I lifted this up, I found that the coffer had little enough else in it but a handful or so of gold coins lying about amongst some old things, such as a pair of gloves with great

steel beads on the backs and tops of the fingers, some silk cloths, a great parchment in Latin—which I laid aside—and such like. The gold coins were, however, such as I did never see before, having on them a head of an old man with a great brimmed hat, and stamped on them, Charles X., Roi de France,* 1589. And this set me a-thinking. These coins bore the same date as the pistols, inscribed “Marquis de Pontvismes,” and the indistinct words on the canvas cloth of “ance” and “smes” were the endings of the words France and Pontvismes. What had I lighted on here? I turned it over and over in my head all that day, and many a one after that, but it was very long ere I arrived at any decision.

There were twenty-seven of these coins and nothing more of any worth within that strong box, so I hoisted it away and began upon a second. And in this I found I had indeed come upon a horde. It was full of sacks or bags of coin of all sorts. Sacks with their mouths gaping open wide, bags tied up, and also many loose coins all about. And *they were of all countries* and dates, there being amongst them Spanish pieces of eight, Portyguese crusadoes, English crowns, and many more French coins, as well as hundreds of gold pieces of our kings and queens, away back to Queen Elizabeth. Later that day I counted of these pieces up, and made them come to over two thousand pounds.

* This would appear at first sight to be an error on the part of Nicholas Crafer. It was not so, however; Cardinal Bourbon was elected King of France by the league in 1589 (against Henri IV.), under the name of Charles X., and some coins were struck by him. — J. B.-B.

Then next, in the others, I did find as follows, on the list I enclose; all of which I do reckon, one way with another, bringeth the gross up to what I have said, namely, fifty thousand guineas. Here is that list.

Note.—Unfortunately it was not here. Reginald turned all the sheets over and over again, but could not find it. Perhaps by one of those pieces of carelessness which seemed to have pervaded both Nicholas's and Mr. Wargrave's system, it had been originally mislaid. But, however that might be, it was not at this period that the former's descendant was to learn all the items which went to make up the fifty thousand guineas.—J. B.-B.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE MIDDLE KEY.

So with this my huntings and findings were all over. I had found a fortune, while the Lord only knew who would ever enjoy the spending of it, though, for one thing, I felt very sure it would not be I myself. There was no likelihood of that. I could never get it back to England, and, if I did, then 'twould at once be said that I had stolen it—either with or without Phips' connivance, and that he and I were a brace of thieves.

But what use to ponder on such things as these! For aught I knew I might never get back to England after all; though, somehow, there was a something in my mind which did ever tell me I should do so. Meanwhile, the present was enough to occupy my attention. Firstly, the night was coming on once more and still I had found no oil, so that I must now cease all labours until the next day. In truth I was ready to do so, for I was weary again by now, and another thing was also very certain, to wit, that in this hut I must take my abode. I could not go a step away with all the treasure there was here.

So I placed the oblong box down into the vault along with the other goods, and then, after I had made an evening meal of some neat's-tongue and bread cake,

washed down with the water from the rill, in which also I laved my face and hands, I looked to the primings of all the pistols, got out my cutlash, and, stretching myself across the top of the trap-door, I addressed myself to sleep. At first it would not come in that horrid spot; again and again I saw the form of the dying pirate and heard his yells and singing; and toasts. But at last I slept peacefully until the day broke.

And now I had to set about removing all the treasure from the hole where it had lain for doubtless so long—for I did not believe that Alderly was the man who had obtained all this wealth, but rather that some earlier corsair than he had done so and buried it, and that Alderly in some strange way had lighted on it. It was necessary that I should find a new hiding-place for it. "Martin with the sloop" might—if he were indeed an actual being and not the vision of some long dead and gone comrade, perhaps of another part of the world, as I now had a mind to believe—come back at any moment, and also he might know of the buried wealth in spite of the pirate's words having been, "None know but I." For 'twas useless to give credence to any of the utterances issuing from the bemused brain of Alderly—there might be no Martin, or if there were he might know nothing, or, on the contrary, he might know all. At any rate, my part was to make everything safe.

But how to do it? I must remove it to a hiding-place that would be always found, that should be marked in a way and manner which time could not

destroy. For who could tell when it might be sought for again? I had then, or, I should rather say, I was then maturing in my mind the idea of writing down all this which I have now done—with great pain and labour to myself!—and that writing might not see the light again for twenty years, perhaps even longer. Therefore, 'twas necessary the spot should be such as would never be changing, a spot which must be the same fifty years hence as it was then. Consequently a tree, for instance, could not be made a landmark or indicator, for tempests might blow it to earth, or years rot it away. Then I thought of a spot on which the sun should fall at a given day, hour, and minute—which, as I have heard, is the commonest way of all for persons burying treasure to mark the precise spot—only, supposing ere the time to come when the hoard should be sought for, something was builded over the spot, as might very well be if Coffin Island became settled, as Tortola or Negada and some others are? This risk, therefore, small as it might be, I would not run.

Still, what should I do? I must decide quickly, for if Martin and the sloop were real things and not shadows they might be here at any moment, and if once my task were finished I should not mind their coming very greatly. I could, perhaps, avoid them somehow and get away, leaving the goods safe. Quickly I must decide. Then, as an aid to my doing so, I determined me to walk round the isle, thinking that in such a way a spot might be found suitable for my purpose.

So I set forth, going armed, you may be sure.

Now, this daylight walk of mine about the island showed to me very many things that I had not seen on my midnight rounds, when the terrors and the ghastliness of the hut had driven me forth. I learned among other things that, not very far from the hut itself, was the little upland from which one could look down upon the whole of the isle and all the coast around it, and also I could see down into my cove where I had anchored the galliot, and did observe her lying there safe as I had left her.

Also I found that from this spot I could see for many miles out to sea, and observe that, at least for the present, there were no signs of my haunting fear, Martin and his sloop. To the south lay Tortola, Anguilla, and St. Martin; to the east lay Negada, but away to the west nought met the eye, Porto Rico being out of vision. And as for those poor miserables who inhabited the two first above mentioned, if they were still alive and had not died of melancholy, they gave no signs of being so; there was no boat upon all the waters, no smoke rising from hut or cabin; nought gave evidence of the islands being inhabited but the faint lights I had seen at night. But what concerned me and my present desires most was that to the north of this, Coffin Island, I did see some little Keys or sandy spots, covered with their weeds and bushes, lying out about a hundred yards from my island.

“Why not there?” thinks I, upon this. “Why not one of those? ’Tis now the high tide,” as I took occasion to observe, “and they are above water, there-

fore 'tis not like they will ever be submerged, or, if even so, they will come forth again. And there are three close together; it shall be the middle one if on inspection all seems well."

So, upon this, I got me down to my boat and rowed round from the side of Coffin Island, where the river was, to the north where the Keys were, and went on to the middle one. It was, as I have said, covered with bushes and weeds, none very tall, and it being now the season there were a-many turtles on it laying of their eggs, as they will do in any unfrequented and quiet spot.

"Yes," says I, "this must be the place and none other," and with that I pulled away at a great bush in the middle of the Key I was standing on, and on getting it up did see that the soil was nearly all sand. And again I said, "This must be the place."

So I went off once more, resolving to get to work this very day, and, making a journey to the hut, I brought off the spade and mattock and the least heavy of the coffers—I mean that one that had the Death in it, and when I was back on the Key I began my digging at once, and the sand being extremely light I soon had got down some ten feet, so that at last I had a task to scramble out of the treasure's future grave. Then I made more journeys, and, in the end, by sunset had gotten all the coffers as well as the long box on to the Key. And this night I decided to sleep there, as I would not leave the goods alone until they were buried—though I do believe that, had I left them

there exposed on the isle until now when I write, they would very like have remained untouched; for Martin I concluded now to be entirely a myth, and as for other pirates, they would never come to such Keys as this when the whole place swarmed with real islands.

At sunrise I was at it again, having ate some turtle eggs for my meal—a pleasing change for me—and by midday all was done. The four coffers and the box went in one atop of each other, the uppermost one being, at its lid, three feet from the surface, and with on top of each a turtle shell, of which there were several lying about the Key. These I put in also because the shells are almost imperishable, and, should the coffers decay, if they have to lie—as they may, who knows?—twenty or thirty years in the ground before this my history is found, the great shells will protect the contents somewhat, though no harm that I know of can come to coins, jewels, and so forth from a-lying in the earth. Then, when all was filled up, I did most carefully arrange the place so that, if by any strange chance anyone should here land, no signs should be given of a disturbance being made. I replanted the bush over the spot; with some brushwood and scrub I removed some spare grains of sand that had been thrown up, and arranged everything as best I might, going so far as to take some turtles' eggs and place them about, so that they should give the idea—if anyone did land here—that the turtles themselves had disturbed the spot in their crawlings and creepings.

And now, for your guidance, I will write down

how you shall find this spot, and also will I draw as well as may be a little map.

First you are to know that—as the hydrographer of his Majesty's Admiralty hath since informed me—Negada is situated $18^{\circ} 46' N.$, $64^{\circ} 20' W.$; Tortola is $18^{\circ} 27' N.$, $64^{\circ} 40' W.$; and Coffin Island is consequently, since it doth lie a little to the north of Negada, as near as possible $18^{\circ} 48' N.$, $64^{\circ} 20' W.$ Wherefore, if you make these degrees, there you shall perceive that isle, shaped as it is named, long like a coffin, thin at the foot, broad higher up, then somewhat narrow again, the foot pointing due west, the head due east. Also the little upland I have spoken of riseth from the centre, perhaps one hundred and fifty to one hundred and eighty feet. Then, due north of that and exactly in a line with the shoulder of the coffin-shape, there are the Keys, and the middle contains the treasure. Now, read again. From the north side of the middle key to the spot where I buried all the coffers and the box is fifty-one good strides of three feet each, from the south side to the same spot is fifty-three strides, from the east is forty-nine strides, from the west is fifty strides and a half. Therefore, you shall not miss it if so be that, when you have taken your first measurement from the spot where you land, you stick in the ground your sword and there make, or persevere until you make, all your other strides correspond with what I have wrote down. And I have made no mistake, for three times did I go over the ground and all times did the measurements tally.

Do you likewise and you shall find what I did bury.

Now here is a little map, rough, as befits a drawing made by me, yet just and true.



I shall be dead before you who find this can read it, so that, perhaps, it boots not very much that I should write down any more. Yet some things I desire to tell, and some things I think it right for me to leave on record.

But first let me say what was the end of my sojourn here.

When I had buried all of the treasure—excepting those pieces of gold which I took away with me, not knowing where I might find myself ere I reached home—if ever—I made for the galliot. For now I had done with the hut—I never desired to see it again.

However, so that no signs of disturbance or diggings should be apparent, should any come after me, I first of all covered up, on my last visit to it, the spot from whence I had taken the treasure, and, moreover, I filled in the hiding place with earth fetched from outside, and also the descent by the

steps. Indeed, I would have burned the place down to the ground, only that I feared to set the whole island on fire and so attract attention to my presence from the other isles. And that there should be no more digging, if I could help it, without great pains, I dropped the spade and mattock into the sea.

I say that I wished to attract no attention from the isles, the reason whereof was this, which I had arrived at after many ponderings. If I were known to be there, or if I went to those isles and showed myself, I must be subject to many questionings, must explain all and my chasing of the pirate, and—who knows?—in the course of talk more might leak out than I should care for. And, therefore, I had taken a determination; I would not go near the other isles, but, boldly and without fear, directly the wind was favourable—which it was not now—I would steer for the reef once more. 'Twas, I did calculate, not more than ninety miles away; the galliot could sail that very easily in two days, and, for finding the spot, why that also was very easy to be done. I could well steer a course by keeping Porto Rico on my larboard beam, and then, when the great hump of Hispaniola's Northern Promontory did come into view, could find the road to the reef.

From there, if Phips was gone, I must to the Bahamas—for I should not dare to go ashore in Hispaniola now, since the news of the Black's death, and Geronimo's rage at being defeated of what he thought due, might lead me to trouble—and I could, perhaps, get to the Inaguas. These, for there are two of that name, the Great and the Little, are in

the Windward Passages, well known to navigators, very useful for putting into for refitting and watering, and belonging to our Crown.

Yet—for so things will sometimes happen—nought went as I had forecast. And this you shall hear, after which my history is concluded—for which I devoutly thank the Lord, and shall, on the Sabbath after it is finished, offer up a special prayer of thanksgiving in Branford Church that I have been allowed to bring it to an end—and I shall then have no more to tell.

CHAPTER XXVI.

NICHOLAS LEAVES THE ISLAND.

Now, when all was prepared for my setting forth and when I had gotten the galliot ready for her next cruise and had also taken in some fresh water, a small live turtle, some fruit, and all my bread and peas—now running very low—chance was against me for a while. Even for three weeks the wind did blow strong from the north-west, while all the time I desired a wind from the south-east, and I began to ponder if at this season of the year it did not perhaps stay in the same quarter altogether. There was, however, nought to do but to possess my soul in patience, to keep ever a cheerful heart, and to trust in God, as all my life I have done. Meanwhile, in some ways the delay was not altogether to be repined at, for I made, during it, several visits to the Key in my boat and observed that now there was no sign at all of the burying I had made. The bush above the spot had taken root again at once, and was growing and flourishing, some rain storms that had come had smoothed and made solid the disturbed earth, and the turtles were laying of their eggs all around as if no human foot had ever stood upon the Key.

One thing alone troubled me, and that was food—or rather bread, for this was now running very short. If I did not get away soon, I should have to do without

it altogether, or go seek for some in Negada and Tortola. Yet neither, I was resolved, would I do this, but rather exist without bread at all. I was a sailor, I ever told myself, and a sailor should be able to endure all hardships.

But on the twenty-second day since I buried my spoils a change came. I was sleeping in the cabin of my galliot, when with the dawn I perceived it. The north-west wind from which I had been sheltered in my cove had never disturbed the vessel; now from her starboard side, which was to the south as she lay, there blew in a hot southern wind, waves and riplots came into the cove from that direction and lapped against her bows, and she began gently to rise and fall and heel over a little from them, as though she were a living thing, impatient to be off.

"'Tis come," I exclaimed, springing up. "The hour has come to bid farewell to this spot. If this wind hold forty-eight hours I shall be at the Inaguas if I find not Phips at the reef."

The morn was not yet however, but was anigh as I stepped to the deck; the breeze sweeping up from the long line of islands to the south was a-freshening; the stars began to pale, the new moon to wane. No time could have been better for me than this quiet period before the dawn to steal away.

In half an hour I was well outside the cove, the masts stepped, the sails set—and I at the helm had set forth upon my road home. 'Twas a strange voyage for one alone to undertake—had there been another, or even a boy, to relieve me 'twould have been nought; but now 'twas a voyage without a compass or aught to

guide me, nothing indeed to help me but the mercy of heaven, my knowledge of the sea, and my strong frame and good health. However, we slipped round Coffin Island a little later, and I saw for the last time the spot that held the buried treasure. The little Key was visible beneath the now rising sun, the sea-birds were wheeling round and about it, and the blue water rippled on its shores. And so I took farewell of it, knowing that I should never see it any more. May you, whomsoever you may be for whom I write this narrative, find it as I left it, unharmed and untouched. May your eyes gaze upon it and find therein what I left behind when mine have long been closed in death.

And now I had nought to do but steer my bark for that easterly point of Hispaniola called of late Cape François, and so I should come near to the reef, and this, since the wind was very good and not boisterous, 'twas easy enough to do. When I was weary I would lower down the sails, lash the rudder, and so take some rest—doing this, of course, by day only, since when the night came I must keep good watch—and then set sail again when refreshed, finding my course easy enough by the sun and breeze.

And so the first day passed, and I did calculate that—allowing for my rest—I had left Coffin Island some twenty to fifteen leagues behind me, and, so that I should not pass the Bajo and thereby run on to *Moushoire Carré*, or Turk's Islands, I shortened sail. Yet this I need not have done neither, for in some way I had not got my calculations aright. At dawn there was no land in sight as I thought to see, so that the galliot had not sailed as I guessed, or I had missed

my course. The wind, however, and the sun forbade me to think this, so I made all sail again and went on.

At midday I did discover I was on the right tack; Cape François and Samana rose on my beam end, therefore I knew that by altering my course a point to the north I must strike the spot where the reef was. And this I did, judging by the sun that it was four of the afternoon when first I saw the little shoal waters over it.

I know not even now if I was glad or sorry to perceive—as I did very soon—that the *Furie* was no longer there. Yet I think it was the latter, for I had hoped to hear the cheery shout of Phips, to see my brother officers come round me, to hear the welcomes of the men, and to be able to tell my tale. But 'twas not to be. All around the reef was as lonely as if no plate ship had ever sunk there, no attempts ever been made to get up its contents, no horrid tragedy happened such as that when Phips slew the Black and executed of his companion. Birds flew about all over it, seeking perhaps for scraps of food where not a month ago they had found a plenty, the little waves foamed over the sunken reef where the now emptied treasure ship lay—but that was all.

No! I forget. 'Twas not all. As I drew near I saw sticking up from the water—as I had not been able to see before because of the flittings of the many gulls—that which looked like a jagged piece of mast, or yard of a ship, with something crosswise a-top of it, and my curiosity being great I got the galliot near to it. I knew I could do this, since she had gone over the reef often enough when acting as a tender, and

when 'twas done I saw that it was indeed a mast standing up endwise in the water, the lower part doubtless fixed into some crevice or hole by the diver ere the *Furie* left. And the cross-piece nailed on to the top of the mast was in the form of a big arrow rudely carved, placed so that it pointed towards where Europe was, and with on it the words, "To Nicholas Crafer. Make your way home." That was all, yet it told enough. The *Furie* had gone home with the treasure; if I was still alive I was to go too.

* * * * *

Let me be brief. That remaining day and night I anchored off our original little isle, took in some fresher water than I had, and caught some fishes. Also I once more did cover again the bleached bones of those mutineers who had endeavoured to surprise and seize upon the *Algier Rose*—'twas the last time, I reflected, it would ever be done by me or any. There was no danger of losing the favourable wind by resting here for these few hours; if anything it was blowing stronger and fresher from the south-east than before. Nay, when I put off in the morning for the furtherance of my course, it was blowing so much in a manner I cared not for, namely in fitful gusts followed by moments of stillness, that I doubted me if I was overwise in putting to sea again yet. Moreover, the wind was almost due south by now, so that to make the Inaguas I should have much more trouble and work than when sailing large and free before a favourable breeze.

However, I must go, I would not be detained. Indeed, I had come to hate all this region so much

that, even should a chance arise in the future for me to come out and bring off all my treasure, I felt as though I should have no mind to it. Phips might come an he would, and get it, but, for myself, I wanted not to come again. If the Hispaniola plate had been gotten back safely, then there would be a share for me that would keep me from the wolf for the remainder of my days. It would not be wealth, but would doubtless suffice—and I had finished with the sea!

Though not yet.

When I was two hours out from our little isle, and, as I believed, near unto *Moushoire Carré*, I did discover that I had been foolish to put out against so fast rising a wind. For it had now freshened into a gale due from the south, so that I had to sail close-hauled if I wanted to pass that place in safety, and also Turk's Islands. Nor even a little later was this possible, as it blew more and more. I could no longer manage both sails and helm. So now I had to take down most all my sail excepting the foresail to steady the galliot, and to put her head before the wind, abandoning of my course altogether. And not long afterwards the storm had become a furious one, the whole heavens were obscured, the sea rose horribly—I saw at this moment a picaroon in distress a little way off me, and shortly go down—and my galliot did seem to be doomed.

And now I never thought but that I had reached my journey's end, that all was over with me. Huge seas swept over the bows, the vessel soon began to fill with water, she rolled and tossed from side to side so

that I could not keep my feet, and then I heard a crash, I saw the mainmast falling swiftly towards me, I felt a blow that shot a thousand stars from my eyes, and I knew no more.

* * * * *

When I again recovered of my senses I understood not at first where I was, excepting that I was lying in a berth in a dark cabin, that all my head was swathed in cloths, and that standing near me was an elderly man, regarding me attentively.

"Where," I asked, "am I? This is not the galliot."

"So," he replied in my own tongue, "you are an Englishman! We thought by the build of your galliot that you were a Dutchman. Who and what are you?"

"Lieutenant Crafer, late of his Majesty's navy, and late first Lieutenant of the *Furie*, Captain Phips. What ship is this?"

"His Majesty's *Virgin Prize*, a 32-gun frigate, Captain John Balchen. Homeward bound. You should know this officer, Lieutenant Crafer."

"Very well," I answered. "We have served together. Yet 'tis not strange if he knows not me, no razor has touched my face for many weeks."

And so it was that I found myself bound to England in a King's ship, having for her captain a man whom I had been at sea with ere now, when he was my subaltern. That I told him all as regards the treasure you are not to suppose; that secret was locked in my own breast, to be divulged to one only, Phips.

But I did give him a very fair and considerable history of much that we had gone through, and, living with him in his cabin and at his table, you may be sure that we had many talks on the subject of the sunken plate-ship.

“Yet,” said he often, “I misdoubt me if King James will be there to take his tenths when Phips gets the *Furie* home. The people will endure him but little longer—he is now an avowed Papish—and already there are whisperings of putting one of his daughters in his place. If ’twere Mary all would be well, since she is married to a staunch Protestant, though the country would scarce accept him, too, I think.

Yet, as you will see by later day history, James was still there when I got back. And this I did on Lady Day in the year of our Lord 1687, the *Virgin* Prize making Portsmouth a month after she picked me up, a corpse as they first thought, from the deck of the galliot, which was cast off after I was rescued. It seemed from their calculations and mine that I must have been met with some hours only after I was struck down, and at first they thought I had been attacked by the picaroon—which ships are generally full of thieves—which they had been a-chasing.

So, in this way, I came back from my second voyage to the wrecked Spanish Plate Ship, and put my foot once more on my native land at Portsmouth Hard.

And now but a few words more and I have done.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE NARRATIVE ENDS.

'Twas at the Navy Tavern at Portsmouth that I learned that Phips had preceded me home but a fortnight, that he had sailed to the Downs with the *Furie* and all her contents, and that, most faithful to his word, he had sent a letter for me. In it he said that he prayed to God I might some time or other get back safe to England—and that, if he should be gone away again, he would charge himself to leave my share of the sale of the treasure in safe keeping, of which I should be advised both by a letter to the Admiralty directed for me, and also by another to this tavern. Likewise, he said, he trusted that I had been able to come up with that most uncommon rogue and villain, Alderly, that I had taken vengeance of him for his treachery, and that I had recovered whatever I might find he had stolen from the Plate Ship. And if, he said, I had been enabled to bring that stolen wealth back with me, then I was to communicate with his Grace of Albemarle—supposing him, Phips, gone—who should see that it was properly directed to the right quarters.

So there was now nought for me to do but to make for London myself, after I had slept one night in the old town, changed a few of the gold pieces I had taken off Alderly ere I buried him, and bought

me a fair decent change of clothes in which to travel and appear in London. And in fifteen hours I was there from the time of my setting out, and once more ensconced in an inn I had heretofore patronised, namely, "The Blossoms," in Lawrence Lane, Cheap-side.

The finding of Phips after this was by no means difficult; even at the inn they had heard of his arrival: they told me, indeed, that there was much commotion both on Change as well as in Court and Naval circles at the amount of treasure he had brought home with him; while—says my hostess to me—

"Might you, sir, be the gentleman they say he left behind to chase those cruel, wicked pirates who had stolen part of the treasure he did find?"

I answered that I was indeed that officer, whereon she told me that the town talked much about me, that even some of the journals had written discourses upon my having gone off to chase pirates in nought but a ship's boat—as they termed it—and that it would be a fine thing for the gentry who produced those sheets when they should hear that I was safe back so very little a while after Phips himself.

However, I wanted to see Phips himself, and this I very soon did, finding of him by presenting myself at the Duke's house, where I noticed a most extraordinary bustle going on, and discovered that his Grace was just about to proceed to Jamaica to take up the governorship thereof. Poor man! he did but enjoy it a year, all of which time he was thinking of nought but finding new treasure round about that

island, and then at the end of that his bottle took him off. However, 'tis the present I have to tell of, and will, therefore, but say that, ten minutes after my announcement, the Duke came to me.

"Now," said he, greeting me, "this is the joyful day, Lieutenant Crafer; I do indeed rejoice to see you back safe and sound, and so will Phips. He is hard by—he shall be sent for."

Whereon he ordered a man to go to the lodgings and to tell Sir William Phips that Lieutenant Crafer was gotten home safe and sound.

"Sir William Phips!" I exclaimed. "Sir William! So! has he come to such honour as that?"

"He hath, indeed," laughed the Duke, who seemed more jolly now than when we went out with the *Furie*—perhaps his new appointment making him so—"he hath, indeed. The King seemed so well pleased with his tenth that he insisted on knighting our friend, and hath even silenced those wretches of the city who say that—that Phips, and—well, no matter."

"What do they say, my Lord Duke?" I asked, though I could very well guess.

"Oh! 'tis nothing, a trifle! and, since neither the King nor I believe it, not to be considered."

"I can imagine what they say, your Grace," I exclaimed. "It is that we have feathered a nest somewhere—that all has not been brought home that was found. Yet, 'tis not true——"

"Tush, man, tush!" interrupted the Duke. "Who shall think it is?"

"It is not true," I went on. "Every farthing's worth Phips got he brought home, I will swear—

while as for what Alderly stole from the plate ship, why, they sunk it when we boarded them."

"Man alive!" exclaimed the Duke, "who doubts it? I do not, who am the chief concerned, nor will the King hear a word. See, here is a testimony I mean to give to Phips. A gold cup I have had made out of a thousand pounds' worth of the treasure. 'Tis for his wife in Boston, now Lady Phips, to whom he hath sent out instructions to buy a fine brick house to live in. For, you must know, the King hath promised him the Governorship of Massachusetts as soon as it falls vacant, when he will be settled for life."

I regarded the cup, very costly and beautiful, engraved, "From Christopher, Duke of Albemarle, to his trusty friend, Sir William Phips," while the Duke bade his servant bring us a tankard, and at that moment in came Sir William himself hot haste to see me.

* * * * *

"No," he said to me that night, as we sat at wine in his lodgings hard by the Strand, "no, Nick, that hidden treasure is yours, and yours alone. It belongs not to our providers here, nor does any share pertain to me. You it was who found it, you it was who had all the risk in going to find it. It shall be yours and yours only, since none other of the galliot's crew are now in existence. Only," he went on, "as now you are provided for, I would leave it there awhile. Say, for another generation. For if you go and dig it up now, then will the merchants

say that they spoke truly when they accused us of robbing them."

"I shall never go to dig it up," I said, "I will go to sea no more. The Duke tells me there is four thousand pounds for me at Sir Josiah Child's—'tis enough to do very well for my life. I will buy me a little house somewhere, and an annuity from some nobleman with the rest."

"And," went on Sir William, "in that little house find out a hiding place, and leave therein a full description of where your treasure is, so that those who come after you shall, if they care to be at the trouble thereof, discover a fortune. You will be marrying now, Nick, perhaps?"

"Nay," said I, "I think not. Never now! Once when my heart was young and fresh I did love a sweet young girl—she was the daughter of a retired officer of Oliver's, and they dwelt at Kew—but the small-pox ravaged the land and took her from me. I find myself thinking of her often now; perhaps 'tis because the time is drawing near when I shall see her again, as young and fair as she was in those bygone, happy days; but I shall never have a wife."

"Poor Nick, poor Nick," said Phips, laying his great hand very gently on my shoulder. "Poor Nick. So you have had your romance too. Ah, well! so have most men." Then a little later he said, "You know I go out again with Sir John Narborough—I cannot rest quietly at home in Boston till my rule begins in Massachusetts—we shall be near your little Key—shall I go and dig your spoil up? I would do it most faithfully for you, Nick, as you know."

"No," I answered, after pondering a-while. "No, not unless you will do so and take it, or some of it, for yourself."

"That," said he, "I will never do. Not a stiver, not one coin. 'Tis all yours."

"Then let it lie there," said I, "for those who shall come after me. There is one other Crafer left in Hampshire, a country gentleman, who has perhaps some children now. It shall be theirs when I am gone if they choose to search for it."

So we parted for the last time, not without tears in our eyes, we having been so much to each other for so long that we could not easily say farewell.

As for him, he went on his cruise with Sir John Narborough, but, as he after wrote me, he found nothing.

And then the time came for him to take up his rule in his own land, which he did wisely and well, and perhaps because of his old belief in sooth-sayers, and wizards, and geomaneers—and, indeed, the knave I have writ of did tell his fortune most wondrously, even to his becoming a ruler though not a King—he spared many in New England who would have been barbarously entreated otherwise. And he took with him a fine gold medal, which the now fast falling King had had struck in honour of his finding the galleon's wreck, having on it the words *Semper tibi pendeat Hamus*, which the curate of Mortlake did afterwards translate for me as meaning, "May thy fishing always be as good to thee."

It bore on it a supposed drawing of the *Furie*, but none too accurate, though near enough.

Of the treasure the Duke took £90,000, His Majesty's tenth was something under £20,000, but not much, and the merchants got many of them £8,000 to £10,000, for every £100 they had adventured. This is speaking roundly, as I have heard sums of more and less mentioned in connection with all concerned. Phips's share, as he told me, was £16,000, and would have been more had he not out of his own purse paid to a-many of the seamen some sums which the merchants withheld from them. Cromby's old mother was dead, I found on inquiring, so that I could do nothing there.

Now, 'twas some six years afterwards, and when James had been gone nigh that time to France, that Phips wrote to me he was a-coming to England and hoped among others to see me. Yet, alas! we never met again. I was at this time sore troubled with gout and rheumatism—though, I thank God, much of both have passed away—and I could not, therefore, go to see him. Nor, neither was he ever able to come to me. He had not been in London many days when he caught a cold, and this turning to a fever he died. And he was buried in the Church of St. Mary Woolnoth, where, when I was recovered, I went and said a prayer above his tomb.

Why should I write a funeral sermon on him for those who never knew him? Suffice, therefore, if I say that he was honest, manly, and Godfearing, and a better man did never live. To me, his subaltern, he was ever kindly, gentle, and friendly, very courteous, yet also, when we came to know each other, very

brotherly ; and to conclude, I loved him. No need to say more.

Now I have done. Almost all the evenings of four months it hath taken me to write this story down—I beginning of it in the bleak 'cruel nights of winter, and ending of it when the leaves are pushing forth. And I have written as truly as I know how, telling no lies, and trying also very hard to make my story understandable to whomso'er shall come across it.

My house—which I bought here, because 'twas across the river in years agone I used to wander with the girl I loved so dear, and because I can see the paths where we walked when I arise from my bed every morning—I shall leave to a Crafer for ever, so that some day, if the line dieth not out, one of that name must find the clue. That it shall be a Crafer I do earnestly hope, but if not it cannot be helped. And in conclusion all I will now say is, that I do pray that whosoever readeth this narrative, and whosoever afterwards shall find the buried treasure on the little Key, he will use it well and nobly, devoting some part of it, if not all, to God's service. Amen.

NICHOLAS CRAFER.

The Search by Reginald Crafer.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

OFF TO THE VIRGIN ISLES.

THE passengers by the Royal Mail steamer, especially the younger and fairer members thereof, felt an emotion of genuine regret when Reginald Crafer left the ship at Antigua, there to make the connection with the company's vessel, the *Tyne*, which runs to Anguilla and Tortola fortnightly.

For like so many, nay, almost all naval officers with but few exceptions, Reginald possessed those manly and pleasant graces which soon endear a stranger to any number of persons among whom he may happen to be thrown: and ere the steamer—crowded with tourists of the better class who were avoiding the rigour of our winter by a tour in the West Indian Islands—had been a week out of Southampton, he had made himself a general favourite. Of course he could dance—when did a sailor ever exist who could not?—also he could sing; he had seen much of the world and he was good-looking. Let anyone who has been on an ocean trip say if these accomplishments and charms are not sufficient to at once make a man popular in the community assembled on such an occasion.

And also there was about him some slight tinge of mystery, some little reticence on his part, as to what he wanted or desired to do at Anguilla or Tortola,

which added a flavour to the manner in which this handsome young officer was regarded. For at either of these islands there is nothing for a man to do at all, unless he should desire to pass his life in breeding herds of goats, cows, or sheep, or in fishing, or rearing poultry, or cultivating a little cotton or sugar. And certainly Reginald Crafer did not seem to be a man of that sort.

"It can't be to see the bloomin' islands," said a bagman on board who was not a favourite, though possessing vast information about the locality, derived from visiting the whole of the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea on business, "because there's nothing to see, and as a naval officer I'll bet he's seen enough islands. And it can't hardly be a gal."

"Scarcely, I should imagine," said a stately young lady, by whom, as by others, this person's remarks were not much appreciated, "since I believe there are few gentlemen or ladies there except the Consuls and their families. Nor do I see that Lieutenant Crafer's business is your affair or mine," whereon she turned on her heel and left him.

Meanwhile Reginald, who, perhaps, was not unconscious of the curiosity he had raised, though taking no notice of it, had plenty to think of as well as having always to keep a guard upon his tongue.

Indeed, it would not be saying too much if the announcement was made that the discovery of Nicholas Crafer's statement had produced a total change, not only in this young man's method of life, but also in his mind.

When he had finished the perusal of that

statement (which, you may remember, he began one November afternoon) another day had come; a foul, murky, fog-laden atmosphere was doing duty for the dawn. The river reeked with it, and so did the fields across the Thames. Also the fire had gone out now, though he had made it up several times during the night, the lamp had consumed nearly the last drop of oil in its glass bowl, and he could hear his old housekeeper and general servant shuffling about upstairs as though preparing to begin the day. And his eyes were wet with tears—tears which the last page or two of that finely-written, often misspelt, and sometimes nearly illegible manuscript had caused to spring to them. For to him, young and impressive—though as yet his heart had never been fairly touched by Love's rose-tipped wings—there seemed a sadness inexpressible in the story of his ancestor's love for the daughter of one of Oliver's officers who had died so young, and of the manner in which he had bought the house, so that daily, when he arose, the first place to meet his eyes should be the spot where they had walked together in those long-forgotten years.

“Poor old Nicholas!” he thought, as he went to the French windows and drew the heavy curtains that protected the room from the river's damp, and peered across that river to the other side; “poor old Nicholas! It was there you used to walk with her when you were both young. It was there, when you had grown old and she had long since gone and left you, that you used to gaze and dream of her. And,” he went on, as he turned back into the room, “it was here, in this

very spot, two hundred years ago, that you sat night by night writing that story alone, as I this night have sat alone and read it. I almost wonder that your ghost did not come forth and stand at my elbow, and peer over my shoulder at your crabbed, crooked handwriting as I did so."

He dropped the manuscript in his pocket as he finished his meditations and, going upstairs, met the old housekeeper coming down.

"Lawks, Mr. Reginald!" she said with a start, "what a turn you give me! Whatever have you got up so early for?"

"I have not been to bed yet, Maria," he said, "but I am going now." Then, observing her look of astonishment and the shaking of her head—perhaps she thought he had been wassailing in London and had only just come down by the early train—he said, "I have been engaged all night over some family papers. Call me at twelve and get some breakfast ready by then. I shall go to town directly afterwards. And, Maria, I shall be going abroad again soon; you will have the house all to yourself once more."

"Ha!" she said, with a grunt; "well, who's afraid? I ain't, neither of ghosts nor burgulars, tho' we had one——"

But Reginald was on his way to bed before she had finished her oration.

"The first thing to be done," he thought to himself, as he splashed about in his bath after that five hours' sleep—which was enough for him, since it was more than a watch below—"is to get a promise from the first Sea Lord, on the ground of 'urgent private

affairs,' that I shall not be called upon to serve for another year. If I can manage that, then off I go to Coffin Island and dear old Nick's treasure. Lord bless me! how I would like to have known Nick—as Phips called him."

There had come into the young man's heart as he read that paper a feeling which, I suppose, often comes into the hearts of most of us who have ever had ancestors—the feeling that we would like to have known them, to have seen them and to have shaken hands with them, observed the quaint garb they wore, and listened to their quaint speech. So it was now with Reginald. He would have liked to have heard Nicholas tell the story instead of having read it, would like to have stood by his side when he fought the *Etoyle*, to have been by him when the drunken and delirious pirate died singing his song, to have accompanied him on that solitary voyage when he kept—good honest man!—a cheerful heart and trusted to his God alone to watch over him.

"I wonder whose treasure it was that he found?" the young man meditated—"not Alderly's, at any rate. The pirates never buried their treasure, though the story-books say they did, but rather took it with them to their favourite haunts to spend in a debauch. Even Alderly was doing that at the time Nicholas captured him; he had his box with him, full of ready money for spending purposes. And those others, those antique coins, those jewels and precious things, what were they? Buried, perhaps, by some French refugee who had been cast away on Coffin Island and found by Alderly, or stolen from some French treasure ship by

an earlier pirate than Alderly, yet still found by him. Shall I ever know?"

But, whether he would ever know or not was a matter of very small importance to Reginald Crafer, in comparison with the fact that he was going to find them again himself, if he possibly could. For that they should not lie any longer in the middle Key above Coffin Island than it would take him to go and fetch them, he was very firmly resolved.

"The Key isn't likely to have shifted," he reflected, "nor to have become entirely covered by the sea for good and all. And if it has, why, science has advanced a bit since the days of Nicholas, and we will have it out. The treasure has been found twice as it has been buried twice—once by its original owner, as I believe, and once by Nicholas; I'll make the third finder. There's luck in odd numbers!" and remembering his Latin, of which he had a better knowledge than his sailor relative had had, he murmured, "*Numero deus impare gaudet!*"

The First Sea Lord proved kind, perhaps because Reginald was a young officer who had done well and was favourably known already, besides having once served in his own flag-ship and come under his notice; and though he hummed and hawed a little at first, and talked a good deal about the shortness of lieutenants, and so many being required to be called out for the Naval Manœuvres, and so on, at last said that he thought he might promise that Lieutenant Crafer's services should not be asked for for another year. Then, next, the young man bought a chart of the Caribbean Sea, and, as the charts of

to-day are rather better than they were in the elder Crafer's time, he found Coffin Island marked very plainly, though still not named, thereon; and he also saw the three Keys dotted on it. "So that's all right and comfortable," Reginald said to himself, whereon he at once made all his plans for going on his search, and, as has been told, had by now arrived at Antigua, whence the *Tyne* goes fortnightly to Tortola and Anguilla.

Yet, when he had settled down here to wait for that vessel's sailing—which would not be for another forty-eight hours—he scarcely knew how he should set about his work. Coffin Island might be inhabited by now, for all he knew, though judging by the little knowledge possessed of it by any of the *personnel* of the ship in which he had come out, it did not appear very probable that it was. Nobody on board that ship could say whether it was occupied or not, most of the officers, indeed, being a little hazy as to where Coffin Island was.

However, by the next day he had gained one piece of information which might or might not be true, but that, if the former, was likely to throw some difficulties in his way. He had learnt that there were inhabitants—as his informant believed, though he wouldn't be certain—on the island; for that there was such a place as Coffin Island was very well known in Antigua, if not in the Royal Mail steamers.

He had encountered as he lounged about the hotel in St. John's—which is the capital of Antigua—one of those busy gentlemen who are to be found

in almost every part of the world to which strangers come and go: an American. This worthy person, who was young, tall, and dandified, having in his "bosom" a beautiful diamond pin, addressed Reginald the first moment he saw him with such a flood of offers and questions as almost stunned him; yet so long was the flow of oratory that it gave him time to collect his thoughts and be wary.

"If," said Mr. Hiram Juby, as he handed out a big card with that name on it, "you are thinking of settling here, I can be of assistance to you. Though, if you're buying land, I should scarcely recommend Antigua. It is not very remunerative and not cheap. Now, in Dominica, which has no export duties, sir, Crown land can be obtained for two dollars and a half an acre. Trinidad is five dollars, St. Lucia five; Tobago, also without export duties, is two and a half. I am also an agent for the United States Governmental Insurance Company, patronised and insured in by the first families of the——"

"I am not thinking of buying any land, Mr. Juby," Reginald said, quietly.

"Then you must be a tourist. Therefore, you will want to know the best hotels. Now there is——"

"I shall stay at no hotels," Reginald again replied.

"Stay at no hotels! Then you are perhaps going to camp out. If so, I have the agency for some of the best United States tents, utensils, rifles and guns, hickory fishing-rods, and so forth. Sir, will you take a cocktail, or shall we try a dish of mangrove oysters? Or, if you are a conehologist, mineralogist, or botanist, I should like to show you some collections I have

for sale which would save you much labour and classification——”

“Sir,” said Reginald, “I am none of those things! I am a sailor amusing myself with a visit to this lovely spot. I want nothing,” and he turned on his heel.

“Stay, sir, stay, I beg,” Mr. Juby said, going after him as he left the verandah. “You are a sailor visiting this lovely spot, and you want nothing I can supply you with! Why, sir, I have the very thing for you—a thing that would have suited nobody but a sailor. I have a little thirteen-ton cutter yacht—it belonged to Sir Barnaby Briggs—your countryman, sir, who died of drink, so they said, not I, in Guadeloupe—but then these French will say anything but their prayers. And I will let it you, sell it to you, furnish it for you, find you a sailor man or so——”

“What,” said Reginald, interested now, for he thought perhaps here was the best way of all in which to visit Coffin Island—“what do you want for the hire of it?”

But before even these terms could be arranged, Mr. Juby insisted—and he would take no denial—that they should be discussed over the most popular drink in all the West Indian Islands, a cocktail; so on to the verandah they went to partake of one. And it was among the various acquaintances to whom Mr. Juby—in thorough American fashion—insisted on “presenting” Reginald, that he learnt that Coffin Island was inhabited.

CHAPTER XXIX.

DRAWING NEAR.

"THE Virgin Isles," exclaimed one of these acquaintances as he spat on the ground after swallowing his cocktail at a gulp, "the Virgin Isles! Why, darn the Virgin Isles! What can you do there, young fellow, 'cept go fishing? That is, unless you are a Dane or else a Dutchman"—by which he meant a German—"then you might trade a bit."

But here Mr. Juby, who didn't quite approve of his new client being called "young fellow," explained that he was a gentleman who had neither come to settle nor travel, but only to see the place generally. Also, he informed him, as if the whole thing was settled—which it wasn't—that Mr. Crafer had hired the late Sir Barnaby Briggs's yacht from him and was going to make some tours in it.

"Oh!" said the other, scraping the frozen sugar off the rim of his empty glass as he spoke, and sucking it off his finger—"Oh! if that's all, he's welcome enough to go to the Virgin Isles if he wants to. I thought he wanted to shove some dollars into coco-growing or Liberian coffee. A tourist, eh?"

"That's all," said Reginald, "only a tourist."

"Well! there's good enough sailing round the Virgin Isles or any others in these parts, if you want to sail; but I thought Mr. Juby said you were a

sailor. Now, if you are, what do you want to go sailin' about for? Isn't dry land good enough for a sailor off duty?"

"Do you know the Virgin Islands?" asked Reginald, not caring to notice the man's cantankerous disposition.

"Know 'em! I guess I do know 'em! all the lot. And not one worth a red. Which do you particular want to see?"

"All of them," replied Reginald. "Perhaps Tortola in particular."

"Tortola! the rottenest of the lot, except, perhaps, Anegada. Or, p'raps I'd best say Coffin Island. That is about the—there! well!— I'll be——"

"Coffin Island!" exclaimed Reginald, now very wary. "That's a sweet name! What sort of a place is that?"

"Kinder place fit to go and die in, to just roll yourself up in and kick. Kind of a dog's hole, covered with palm trees, gros-gros, moriches and all, Spanish baggonets and sich like. A place as is all yellow and voylet and pink and crimson with flowers, and smells like a gal's boodwar," (this was an awful mouthful for him, but he got it out safely), "though I don't know much about gals' boodwars neither. My daughters ain't got none."

"It must be lovely," Reginald said quietly.

"Love—ly!" the man echoed. "Love—ly! Bah! there ain't five pounds' trade in it a year. The oranges and guavas ain't worth fetching when you can get 'em in the other places without half the trouble, nor more ain't the nutmegs. Likewise, it's

chock-a-block full of tarantula spiders and centipides."

"In such a case I suppose it is uninhabited," Reginald hazarded.

"Well, no it ain't, not altogether," the other replied. "Leastways, that's to say partly. There's a fisher fellow lives there when he ain't nowheres else, and he's got a son and a darter. They've been a living there for over a cent'ry, I've heard tell."

"What!" exclaimed Reginald and Juby together, while others round who had been listening to the discourse burst out laughing.

"For over a cent'ry and more," the man went on, "this fellow Bridges' family have been living there——"

"Only," chimed in another man, "that ain't the name. It ain't Bridges at all. It's Aldridge."

"No," said still a third, "it isn't Aldridge neither, though something like it."

"Are you telling the story or am I?" exclaimed the first. "And darn the name! What do names matter?" Here he was appeased by the thoughtfulness of Reginald, who suggested some more cocktails round, after which he went on—

"More than a cent'ry, I've heard they've been there. You see, this family is a bit wrong in their heads, and they've got into those heads the idea that somewhere in that darned Coffin Island there's a mort of treasure buried——"

Reginald was sipping his cocktail as the man arrived at this point, and his teeth clicked involuntarily against the glass as the latter uttered the last words; but, beyond this, he did not betray himself.

Yet it seemed to him that his heart beat quicker than before. "And, therefore, if it's to be found," the man continued, "they mean to find it. Yet no one as I ever heard of, or knew, believes it's there. If it was to be got, they'd have got it before. They do say they've dug up half the island looking for it. But there, I don't know, I've never been ashore in Coffin Island myself."

"But," said Reginald, "you said just now that the man only lived there when he did not live somewhere else. Does he leave his island sometimes, then?"

"He does and so does the son. You see, mister, up that way the people are sailors—like yourself!—just because they can't be much else. And good sailors they are, too, as well as fishermen, so when they've got no turtle nor fish to take, as happens in some times of the year, they go off as sailors in any ship in these parts as wants hands. Now, some of 'em goes down Aspinwall and Colon way—that there once-supposed-to-be-going-to-be-made Panama Canal took a lot of men down there—and some goes to the other Islands, even up to Jamaiky and so on. Well, the old man and his son can't always just live on their stock-rearing and fishing and turtle-catching, and so off they goes too, to get a few more dollars to buy a cask of rum or something they want."

"But the daughter; she cannot go as a sailor too!"

"Oh, no! But she can stop at home and look after the shop. And they do say that she's quite able to do it. She's a caution, I've heard."

This was all the man knew, and, under the

influence of the cocktails, he would have been very willing to go on telling more, had he had any further information. And, indeed, considering the distance of Antigua from Coffin Island, it was extraordinary that he should have been able to tell so much. Or, rather, it would have been extraordinary, were it not for the amount of intercourse and communication that takes place between all the numerous islands in the Antilles, and the gossip that is carried backwards and forwards, and is for ever floating about among the sparse population of these, now, much-neglected places.

By night Reginald had changed his plans; instead of going on to Tortola in the *Tyne*, he had decided to hire Sir Barnaby Briggs's yacht, the *Pompeia*, from Mr. Juby, and to finish his journey in her. To him it seemed the wisest thing he could do. He would attract less attention at Tortola as a man cruising about for a holiday in the region; and, by living on board, he would be exposed to little questioning. Moreover, so good a sailor as he wanted no assistance in managing such a craft as this: in calm weather he could go about where he liked, and in bad weather shelter could be run for and reached in almost half an hour among the continuous chain of islands hereabouts. And, finally, he could work his way up to Coffin Island, take some observations of the strange family dwelling thereon, and see if the Keys looked as if they too had been submitted to the searching process.

It was a tough job, however, to bring the astute Juby to terms, even over so trifling a thing as hiring

the *Pompeia*. At first he would hardly name the sum he wanted, and then, when that was arranged at £20 a month—which, after all, was not out of the way—he made various other stipulations, more, as it seemed to Reginald, for the pleasure of so making them and fussing about, than for any wonderful advantage to himself.

“I must have a deposit,” he said, adding cheerfully, “yachts do get sunk even here, and there’s no telling what might happen, though I’m sure of one thing, sir, you wouldn’t run away with her. Then she must be insured in the United States Governmental Insurance Company for the other half, and——”

But, to cut Mr. Juby short, Reginald, who had brought a very comfortable little sheaf of Bank of England notes wherewith to prosecute his search, consented to his terms, and became the tenant of the lamented Sir Barnaby’s yacht. She proved, when he went down to see her before finally concluding negotiations, a very serviceable-looking little cutter, strongly built, having a good inventory, her ballast all lead, copper all new, a full outfit, and a double-purchase capstan. And she bore on her the name of a well-known Barbadoes builder, of whom, probably, the late baronet had purchased her new.

“I don’t mind taking that nigger as far as Tortola,” said Reginald, pointing out a man loafing about St. John’s harbour, “if he wants a job as he says he does, but he’ll have to go ashore there. I’m fond of sailing by myself and shan’t employ him regularly, at any rate.”

And in this way he set off upon his journey once

more, sailing the *Pompeia* himself, and letting the negro potter about, cook a meal or two, and gossip a little on subjects of interest in the islands, but of none at all to him. And at Tortola—to which the man belonged—he sent him ashore, telling him that whenever the cutter came in and out he could come and see if he was wanted, and perhaps earn a shilling or two. The weather was everything that could be desired, and, had Reginald been the most Cockney yachtsman that ever kept a yacht in the Thames, instead of a skilful sailor, he would have found it all he wished, while the cruise past the intermediate islands was charming even to him, who had seen so much of the world.

The great peak of Nevis interested him by recalling the fact that it was in this island that Nelson found his wife, when, as captain of the *Boreas*, he brought his ship here after chasing the French fleet; while St. Kitt's, with its "Mount Misery," and its claims to be the Gibraltar of the West Indies, appealed also to his naval mind. And, when the scarlet-roofed houses of St. Thomas, surrounded by the glorious foliage of that fair island, hove into sight as the *Pompeia* left Santa Cruz on her port beam, he felt a thrill of satisfaction, mixed, perhaps, with excitement at the knowledge that Coffin Island was at hand. Another day or so would bring him to the place of which his relative had, in his quaint style, left so graphic a description; he would probably come into contact with the strange family that dwelt in Coffin Island; he would be near his inheritance.

“Yet,” he said to himself, as he set the yacht’s head a point further north, to run up what still retains its old name of “Sir Francis Drake’s Passage”—“yet is it *my* inheritance? Or does it not by right belong to this poor family, who, it seems, have for over a hundred years been searching hopelessly for it? Is it theirs or mine? Theirs—who, by some strange fate, have come to the knowledge that treasure is buried here, perhaps was buried by their own ancestors, who left the story of it—or mine, who am only the kinsman of the man who lighted on that treasure, but could not take it away with him? Well! I shall see. Perhaps, when I have met these people who live in so primitive a state, I shall know better what to do—know whether it is best to get the treasure and go off with it, or do my duty, and, if it is rightly theirs, restore it to them.”

So, you will perceive, not only was Reginald a romantic and adventurous young man, but also a very straightforward one!

CHAPTER XXX.

OUT OF THE DEPTHS OF A FAR DISTANT PAST.

Two days after these reflections the *Pompeia* was making her entrance under very light sail into that river—spoken of variously by Nicholas as a canal, an inlet, and an outlet—in which the fight with the *Etoyle* had taken place. And it almost seemed to Reginald as if he must himself have been a partaker of that fight, so visibly did his predecessor's story rise before his mind now that he was in the very spot.

"It was here," he thought, as he lowered the last remaining yard of sail, "that the *Etoyle* was across the stream, there that the galliot lay before they went at them. Heavens and earth! why does not Nicholas rise up before my sight with his round face and light bob wig, as he appears in the little picture at home, and in his scarlet coat?—but—no, he would not have them on here. Those braveries were not for cruises such as he was upon."

Then he looked around again.

"Which, I wonder, was the spot where Alderly drew up the box from under the water, and where he murdered the diver? Which the spot where the path led up to the hut? Why does not some spirit rise to point these things out to me?"

All was very calm here now as the romantic young

man indulged in these meditations. There was no sign of life about the island—of human life ; it was as still as though it were uninhabited. Yet all the tropic life was there, all the gorgeous colouring of which the Yankee settler—if he were a Yankee—who told him the story of the place had spoken. The fan-palms, the moriches, and the gros-gros grew side by side ; red poinsettias mingled with wild begonias, purple dracena and yellow crotons ; the rattans and orchids were tangled together in an indescribable confusion of beauty.

“It is the isle of Nicholas’s description. No doubt about that !” said Reginald. “And,” he continued, drawing his pipe from his pocket and lighting it, “I am here as once Nick was here. What a pity there is no one to represent the murdered diver and his assassin, the drunken, maddened pirate.”

As he reflected thus he heard the bark of a dog a little distance off ; a few moments later he heard another sound as though branches were being parted ; presently a voice spoke to the dog, and then the foliage growing down to the river’s bank was pushed aside, and a woman came out from that foliage and stood gazing at him.

“Who are you ?” she asked. “And what do you want ?”

From his cutter to the shore, thirty to forty feet off, he in return gazed upon her, though his surprise did not prevent his remembering he was a gentleman, and, from the distance, taking off his hat to her while he put away his pipe. She stood before him, surrounded by all that luxuriance of colour and tropical

vegetation, a girl "something more than common tall," and of, perhaps, nearly twenty years of age. A girl dressed in a light cotton gown—a very West Indian robe, both in its plain quality and pattern—that hung loosely upon her, yet did not conceal the shapely form beneath. On her head she wore a large flapping straw hat, but it was not at her hat, but at what was beneath it, that Reginald looked. Her features were beautiful—there is no other word but this simple one to describe them—her colouring that which is often found in these regions, but scarcely anywhere else; the eyes a dark, lustrous hazel, the eyebrows black, the hair, which hung down like a mane upon her back, golden, with a tinge of copper red in it.

"Who are you?" she asked again, though he noticed that her voice was not a harsh one, nor, in spite of the question, an angry one. "What do you require?"

"Pardon me," replied Reginald, still spellbound at her appearance. "Pardon me. I hope this is no intrusion. I am yachting in a small way about the islands here. And among other places that attracted my attention was this river. I trust my presence is not objectionable."

"No," the girl replied quietly. Then she said, "Do you belong to the islands, or are you English or American?"

"I am English," he answered. "A sailor in Her Majesty's service."

She paused a moment, as though, it seemed to him, scarce knowing what to say, then she spoke again.

"Are you going to land?"

"If I may do so. If it is permissible."

"Oh, yes," she said. "You may do so. Sometimes people land here."

He took her permission at once, and, dropping the cutter's anchor, drew up the dinghy that was aft of her, and, getting into it, stepped on shore close by her side. And, as he did so, he wondered, "Was it here that Nicholas landed?"

Then once more taking off his hat as he came near to her, he said:

"Why do people sometimes land here? Have you any particular object of interest in your island?" He would like to have added in a gallant fashion, and sailor-like, "besides yourself," but, on consideration, refrained from doing so.

The girl smiled, as he could see, while she bent down to quiet the dog that was jumping about Reginald as though welcoming a new acquaintance. Then she replied—

"No, not any particular object. Yet people come here because there is a history attached to my family, or, perhaps I should say, my family really has a history connected with this island—though I for one do not believe it."

"And that history is?" Reginald asked eagerly.

"An ancestor of mine was supposed to have buried a treasure, or to have found one, and never been able to remove it. Yet, since he lived a wild life—for I fear he was a pirate—he left with his wife, a mere girl, a full description of where it could be found should he at any time fail to return to her. He did fail at last to return, and the place which he had named was this island, the exact spot being a cellar under a

hut." She paused a moment, then she added, "The hut was found and the cellar, but—the treasure was gone."

Whether the faintness which came over Reginald at this moment—a thing he had never experienced before—was caused by the change from the cool sea breezes to the warmth exhaled by the thick vegetation of the island and the rich odour sent forth by the flowers, he has never yet been able to tell. All he knows is that, at her words, the place where they were standing swam round him, the palms seemed to be dancing a stately measure with each other and the island spinning, too, while he heard the girl's voice exclaiming:

"You are not well. What has overcome you?"

"I do not know," he replied. "It must be the heat ashore; yet I am used to all kinds of heat. A little water would revive me. I will go back to the cutter."

"There is a rill close by," she said; "come and drink from that."

He went towards it, following the direction she indicated, his mind still confused, his brain whirling. "Where had he heard of a rill before in connection with the island?" he asked himself; yet as he did so he knew very well it was somewhere in Nicholas's narrative. And the hut and the cellar beneath! Above all, a girl whose red mane was thrown behind her! Where had he heard of one such as that?

He drank from the well and cooled his hands and face—still remembering that Nicholas had in some portion of his story described how he had done this

same thing—and all the time the girl stood watching him.

“You will pardon me this exhibition of weakness, I hope,” he said. “But I am all right now. And your story is so interesting, so much like a romance, that—if I may stay a little longer—I should like to hear some more of it. That is, if my curiosity is not offensive.”

“No,” the girl said simply, and her very ease before him and her lack of ceremony showed how much a stranger she was to any worldly conventionality. “I am very glad to have anyone to talk to. One gets tired of living always, or nearly always, alone.”

“Alone! But surely you don’t live alone in Coffin Island? I had heard there were at least two—two men here.”

“There are sometimes—my father and brother; but they go away to sea for weeks together, especially since they have almost abandoned the thought of our finding the fabulous treasure. They are away now, though I expect them back soon.”

“And you are not afraid to live here all by yourself?”

“Afraid! Why should I be? We cannot find the buried treasure, therefore it is not likely anyone else could do so. And there is nothing else here to tempt anyone.”

“Was there not?” Reginald reflected. “Was there not?” Yet she seemed so innocent and simple that he could not tell her his thoughts. He could not tell her, as he might have told a more worldly girl, that to many men there was a greater temptation

in that graceful form and those hazel eyes and tawny golden hair than in all the dross beneath the surface of the earth. So he only said—

“But if you found the treasure? What would you do then?”

“We should go away, I suppose—though I should be sorry to leave this island. We should go into the world then—perhaps to Antigua or Trinidad.” Reginald here politely concealed a smile, and she went on, “But I hope we shall never find it. My father and brother are used to the life they lead here; I do not think the outer world would suit them.”

“But they are sailors and have seen it, you say?”

“They are sailors, but not such as you. They are simple, rough men, scarcely able to read or to write. That was, I think, why they—why my father—sent me to school at Antigua.”

“But how do you live while they are away?” he asked her now.

“Very well. I have the hut, and there is always plenty of dried meat and fresh fruit. And sometimes I fish, or shoot a bird. There are plenty here of both kinds.” Then she stopped and, looking at him, said, “Would you like to see our home? It is not far.”

The girl’s *naïveté* won on him so that there was but one reply possible—an immediate and fervent assent to this invitation; and a few moments later they were treading a path through the wood.

“The path,” Reginald said to himself, “that doubtless he walked, leading to the hut where he saw Alderly die. The same, yet all so different!”

“A little glade on which the moon did shine as

though on a sweet English field at home," he remembered Nicholas had written—and, lo ! they were in it now. A little glade bordered on all sides by golden shaddockes, grape-fruits, citrons and lime-trees, with, at their feet and trailing round them, the many-hued convolvuli of the tropics, passion-flowers and grandillos. Only, instead of seeking for a blood-stained sea-robber, Reginald was following in the footsteps of this woodland nymph—this girl whose beauty and innocence acted like a charm upon him.

Then, next, they entered the tangled forest that Nicholas had passed through, and here again all was as he had described it. The gleaming leaves of the star-apple shone side by side with the palms and cotton-trees ; the fresh cool plantains and the cashews stopped their way sometimes ; the avocados and yams and custard-apples were all around them. And turning a bend of the path they came upon the hut, even as, two centuries ago, Nicholas had come upon the hut where Alderly had played host to the spectres of his drunken imagination.

Of course it could not be the same ; the old one must long ago have rotted away, even if not pulled down. This to which the girl led him was a large, substantial wooden building, painted white and green, with all around it—which made it appear even larger—a balcony, or piazza, and with jalousies thrown over the rails of the piazza from above the windowless frames. On the balcony were rude though comfortable chairs covered with striped Osnaburgh cloths ; against the railing there stood a gun—it was hers !—and there were large calabashes standing about, some

full of water and some empty, with smaller ones for drinking from.

"This is my home," the girl said. "And it is here that we have lived for nearly two hundred years, the house being rebuilt as it fell into disrepair from time to time. I pray you to be seated. Later, when you have rested, you shall see where the diggings have been made in the searches for the supposed treasure."

"And where," said Reginald, speaking as one in a stupor, "is the spot you told me of, the cellar where the treasure once had been?"

"It is below the floor of this verandah we are standing on. Why do you ask?"

"Your story interests me so," he replied. "It seems so like a dream. But," he continued, "later on, another day, perhaps you will tell me all of it. For instance, I should so much like to know how your ancestor, who at last never returned, came to possess the treasure and to leave it buried here."

"He found it here," she said, "by chance, and ever afterwards he made this island a resort of his. I have told you he was a bad man—I am afraid, a pirate."

Again there came a feeling into Reginald's mind that he was losing his senses, that he was going mad. And the next question he asked, with the answer he received, might, indeed, have justified him in so thinking.

"Will you tell me," he said, "to whom I owe this hospitable reception on Coffin Island? Will you tell me your name?"

"My name," she replied, "is Barbara Alderly."

CHAPTER XXXI.

SOME LIGHT UPON THE PAST.

HER name was Barbara Alderly! This girl whose beauty was as fresh and pure as her mind was innocent, the girl who—in spite of being able to shoot birds for her food and cook them too, or to sail a boat as well as Reginald himself could do—looked as delicate as any girl brought up in an English country house, was Barbara Alderly, *his*, the pirate's, descendant! It seemed impossible—impossible that she could claim relationship with such as he had been; yet it was so!

A week passed from the time she had divulged her name, a week in which they were always together during the daytime—he going to his boat at night, and joining her again in the early morning—and in that week each had told the other their story, Barbara being the first to relate hers. But in justice to Reginald it must be said that, never from the moment he had heard who she was, had he had one thought of keeping back from her the secret of where the treasure was hidden, or of depriving her and her relations of one farthing of it.

“It must all be theirs,” he said to himself, “all, all. I could not go away from this island with one penny of it in my pocket and continue to think myself an honest man.”

But first he had to hear her family story—in itself a romance, if ever there was one—she telling it to him a few days after their acquaintance, as they sat on the verandah, while he drank some water from one of the calabashes, flavoured with a dash of whisky brought up by him from the *Pompeia*, and she played with her inseparable companion, the dog, Carazo.

“You must know,” she began, “that it was not until some years after Simon Alderly—who was the man I think to have been a pirate—failed to return to Port Royal, where he lived, that his still young wife, Barbara—her name being the same as mine—found the paper telling her of the treasure in this island.”

“Barbara!” Reginald interrupted, memory recalling Nicholas’s words once more. “Barbara! A portrait of a girl with blue eyes, red gold hair, and a sweet mouth!”

“What do you mean, sir?” exclaimed his young hostess, looking at him for the first time with something like surprise, if not alarm. “How do you know she was like that? She has been dead for,” and she counted rapidly on her fingers—“for one hundred and seventy years!”

“Miss Alderly,” Reginald replied, “will you believe me if I tell you that I think I shall be able to throw some light upon your family history when I have heard it? I have something to tell you as well as to listen to.”

“Then,” said the girl, “your presence here is not due to accident. You have come purposely to this

island in connection with the hidden wealth it is supposed to contain."

"Yes!" he said, "yes, I could not tell you an untruth. I have come purposely here to find out about that wealth. Believe me, my presence bodes no harm to you or yours, no deprivation of what belongs rightly to you."

"Oh!" she said, "how happy that will make father. But will you not tell me——"

"With your permission," he replied, "I will not tell you anything until you have told me your story. Then I will keep nothing back from you—I will, indeed, help you to recover that which has been sought for so long——"

"You know where it is?"

"I think so. I discovered the secret in England, and I came out here to dig——"

"But," she again interrupted, "if you discovered the secret, then this treasure is yours, not ours."

"No," he said hastily, "no; it would have been mine had I not found that there were people in existence who are more righteously entitled to it. Now I shall find it, if I can, for you. Pray continue your tale. When that is concluded I will begin mine."

For some time he could not bring her to do so, his words having caused her much excitement; but at last she took up the thread of her narrative—the narrative interrupted so early in its commencement.

"This Barbara," she said at last—while all the time her clear eyes had a searching, almost troubled, look, as she kept them fixed on him—"this Barbara

of whom you seem to know, or to have guessed the appearance, though I cannot say if it is a correct one, had herself a strange history. Simon Alderly had found her, a child of about four years old, alone and deserted on one of the Lucayos group, and, since there was a boat washing about on the coast of the island, he thought that possibly she had drifted ashore in it, while her parents, or those who had saved her, had fallen into the sea from the boat after escaping from some sinking ship. He took her off, however, carried her to Port Royal, and, after bringing her up, married her when she was fifteen. Then he left her in charge of his house there, while he, following the calling of a sea-captain, was frequently away from home, sometimes for weeks at a time, sometimes for months, sometimes for more than a year. But whenever he returned he always brought a great deal of money—generally composed of the coins of several different nations—half of which he always gave to her for future household expenses, spending the remainder in great rejoicing while he stayed on shore.”

“This is, of course, family history,” Reginald hazarded, “handed down from generation to generation? Is it not?”

“You shall hear, though you have guessed right. Our family records since that time have been carefully kept.”

“I beg your pardon for interrupting you,” Reginald said. “Pray go on.”

“However,” the girl continued, stroking Carazo’s ears all the while as she did so, “the time came when he returned no more; he disappeared finally in 1687.”

"Ah!" exclaimed Reginald involuntarily.

Again her soft hazel eyes stared full at him as she exclaimed, "You are aware of that; you know it as well as I do!"

"Yes," he answered, "I know it. Once more forgive me."

"Perhaps," she said, "you know as much, or more than I do!"

"No," he replied, "after that I know no more. After the year 1687 down to this period I know nothing further of Simon Alderly—indeed I did not even know that his name was Simon; what you tell me of incidents after that period will be new to me."

"And you will tell me all you know when I have finished?" she asked, looking at him with such trusting eyes that no man, unless he were a scoundrel, could have had one thought of obtaining her confidence and yet holding his own.

"On my honour I will," he answered, "even to telling you where I believe your wealth is hidden."

She made a gesture as though deprecating the word "your," and then, seeing he was waiting eagerly for her to continue, she did so.

"He disappeared finally in 1687—Barbara never heard of him again. Then as time went on she grew very poor. There had been a son born to them whom she had brought up to be a sailor, too, hoping thereby that, when he also became a roamer, he might somehow gather news of his father; and by turning the house into an inn, she managed to exist. In that way years passed and she began to grow old, while

her son still followed the sea, though never rising to be anything more than a humble seaman. But more years after, when she was getting to be quite an old woman, her house was blown down in a hurricane—though it had survived the terrible one of 1722, when all the wharves at Port Royal were destroyed—and then—she found something.”

“What?” asked Reginald. “What was it?” He remembered what David Crafer had found under circumstances not dissimilar, and, perhaps, because he was a sailor—and thereby given even in these modern days to belief in strange and mysterious things—he wondered if the hand of Fate had pointed out to that old Barbara some marvellous clue to where the treasure was. Yet he knew that it could scarce have told her of the removal of the chests of treasure from the island to the Key.

“She found,” went on the Barbara of to-day, “a little walled-up wooden cupboard——”

“Great Heaven!” he muttered beneath his breath, so that, this time, she did not hear him.

“Close to the place where he used to sit and drink when at home, but of the existence of which she was ignorant. Yet, she remembered, he had often told her that there were secret hiding-places in the house, and that, if he died suddenly or never came back, she was to search diligently and she would find them. Especially he bade her search in that room; but, what with waiting and watching for his return, she had forgotten his instructions. And now that it was burst open, the wall that secured it being only a plank of wood which fell out at the first violence of

the hurricane, she found this cupboard full of various pieces of money, gold and silver, and a paper in his writing telling her of his treasure in this island."

"Then it was his!" exclaimed Reginald.

"By discovery. He wrote that he had put into Coffin Island—as it was called even so long ago as his time—in a storm, and that, while roaming about the place, he and his comrades had come upon a hut, old and long since built, but quite deserted now. Then he went on to write—my father has the paper now, and I have often seen it—that the sloop he had was sent to Tortola to fetch provisions——"

"Was it in charge of a man named Martin, by any chance?" asked Reginald.

But now he saw how imprudent he was. As he mentioned that name the girl started from her seat and retreated from him to the other end of the verandah.

"You frighten me," she said. "I do not understand. How do you know this?"

"Do not be alarmed, I beg," he answered in return. "When you have told your story I will put into your hands a paper that has been found, written by a forerunner of mine who knew Simon Alderly. Then you will see how I know what I do. Pray feel no alarm. I mean you nothing but good-will, nothing. The treasure shall be yours and no one else's. Will you trust in me?"

"Yes," she said, once more calmed. "Yes, I will." Then she seated herself again and at his persuasion continued the narrative, while Reginald could not but

reflect how little fear Nicholas need have had of "Martin coming back with the sloop."

The bewildered mind of the drink-inflamed pirate had mixed up two separate sojourns in Coffin Island!

"The sloop went to Tortola to purchase provisions, and, since they were shorthanded, there being but three men excepting my ancestor, all went in her but him. And then it was he found the treasure, it being in a vault or cavern beneath the floor of the hut. It was the simplest way in which he unearthed it, he wrote, and had he not been alone it must have been discovered by the others as well as he. There was a trap-door in the flooring, with a great ring to it, quite visible to anyone, and opening easily. And when he went down some steps into the cavern he found it all—all! Only he had no chance to take it away then, he wrote to his wife; so, putting a vast number of gold pieces in his pocket, he carefully closed the trap-door up again and covered it over with earth, which he stamped down with his feet so that his companions should observe nothing. And in the paper which he left, giving such instructions as were necessary, which were not many—the place was so easily to be found—he wrote down that he had since, whenever opportunity offered, paid visits to Coffin Island, but, being always accompanied by comrades, he never yet had had a chance of removing it. And, he said, if he never brought it home and she found the paper, then she must go to Coffin Island after his death and get it for herself. It was a large treasure, a great fortune, he wrote, it must not be lost."

"So," said Reginald, "she came here?"

"She came here," the girl continued, "and with her came her son and a woman he had married, a Barbadian. But through all the generations from the day she came—which was in the year 1723—and I am the eighth in descent from her, they have never found the treasure. The vault was there, but there was nothing in it."

"Yet your family have continued to seek for it," exclaimed Reginald. "I should almost have thought they would have desisted."

"No," Barbara replied, "they never desisted. For, first, they thought that Simon might have changed the hiding-place after he had left the paper in Jamaica—the life he led would probably necessitate his doing so, since his companions might otherwise have also found the vault—and, next, the island had become their home. Simon's son bought it for half-a-crown an acre, his wife having some little money, and we have lived here ever since, while every man who has succeeded to it has made further search."

So the tale was told, and now the time had come for Reginald to tell his.

And as that night he took farewell of Barbara, he said—

"To-morrow I shall tell you why the treasure has never been found by your family. To-morrow I shall bring you a narrative left by that connection of mine, saying where the treasure is hidden. He knew Simon Alderly, and he found out the hiding-place."

"And was Simon indeed a pirate?" Barbara asked.

"Would it grieve you to hear he was?"

She thought a moment before replying, and then she said—

“No, for we have always thought him to be one. No, not if it will not make you think worse of me for having descended from him.”

“I knew that was so,” Reginald replied, “when you told me your name. And I do not think I showed by my manner that I thought any the worse of you.”

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE SOLITUDE IS INTERRUPTED.

THE weather had changed, and, as is always the case in the tropics, the change was extreme.

The wind blew now from the north-east, dashing the sea up in mountains on to the strip of beach around that quarter of Coffin Island, hurling it with a roar like great claps of thunder over the beach on to the vegetation beyond it, crashing down trees and saplings, and entirely obliterating for a time the three little Keys, in the middle one of which was Simon Alderly's treasure. This Key Reginald had gazed upon more than once since he had been in the island; he had even pointed it out to Barbara on the morning after she had told her tale, and had added the few missing links to the knowledge she already possessed; and he had also informed her that therein lay her fortune.

"So," the girl said on that morning, as she gazed down from the cliff on which they stood to where the already fast-rising waves were washing over the spot in question, "it is there they ought to have searched. It has laid there all the time! Yet no one ever thought of those little islets. Well! I am glad!"

"Why?" asked Reginald, as he looked round at her. He had given her his arm to steady her against

the fierce wind blowing now under the purple, sun-coloured clouds rolling up from the north-east, and she had taken it. Yet, as she did so, she scarcely knew why she should accept that proffered arm. She was used to all changes of weather in this, her island; she could stand as easily upon the tallest crags that it possessed as any of her goats, or even the sea-birds that dwelt upon them, could do. Yet, still, she had taken it!

"Oh! I don't know," she replied in answer to his question; "yet—yet, I think I am. Because—" she paused again, and then went on. "Because, you see, if any of my people had found it before now—before you came here—why, you would have found nothing yourself when you arrived, after you had made so long a journey. And, we should have been gone—you and I would never have met."

Something in the sailor's nature tingled as she said those words in her simplicity—something, he knew not what. Still, in response, he turned his eyes on her, and gazed into those other clear eyes beside him, shaded with their long, jet-black lashes. Then he said—

"For us never to have met would have been the worst thing of all, Barbara."

It seemed absurd to call her Miss Alderly, here in this wild tropical garden inhabited only by themselves; to give her the stilted prefix that would have been required in the midst of civilisation. So, not for the first time, he had addressed her by her Christian name. And to her—who perhaps in her schooldays only, in Antigua, had ever known what it was to be

spoken of as Miss Alderly—it appeared not at all strange that he should so address her.

“But,” he went on, “as for the treasure, as for the finding of it—that might as well have happened fifty or a hundred years ago as now. It is yours and your family’s; not a farthing of it belonged to my relative, nor belongs to me.”

“That shall never be,” she replied. “My father, although a rough, simple sailor, is an honest, straightforward man; he, at least, would never hear of such a thing as your not having your share. And for my brother——” but here she paused.

“Why,” asked Reginald, after a moment had elapsed—“why do you hesitate at the name of your brother?”

“Because,” she replied, “he is different. He is,” and she buried her face in her hands for a moment and then uncovered it again—“he is a cruel, grasping man, selfish and greedy. He rules us more as if he were father than father himself, and he tyrannises even over him. He takes all the money they both earn while they are away together, and, generally, he spends it. When they went to Aspinwall, at the time they were so busy about the Canal, he took all they had both earned and spent it at the Faro and Monte tables, as they call them down there. And once he struck father before me, when they were both at home, because he wanted to go over to Porto Rico, where the Spaniards gamble day and night, and father would not give him the money for some goats he had sold to a Tortola dealer. Oh!” she continued, “he is terrible! and when he takes his share of what

is in the Key, I dread to think of what he will do with it."

As she finished, the storm increased with such violence that it was necessary for them to leave the crag on which they stood—otherwise they would possibly be blown off it ere many moments had elapsed. Moreover, the hot rain was beginning now—and in these regions only a few moments elapse between the fall of the first drop and the drenching downpour of a tropical storm; it was time for them to seek the refuge of Barbara's home. The thunder, too, was very near now, so at once they hurried onwards, gaining the desired shelter before the worst of the storm had set in.

It was to-day—the day following Barbara's account of Simon Alderly—that Reginald had promised to read to her Nicholas's narrative. He had it in his pocket now; indeed he regarded it as too precious a thing to leave carelessly about, and consequently it was always with him, and to-day he proposed ere leaving her to get through some portion of it. He meant to read it all through, partly as a story that he thought would interest the girl, partly as a justification of Nicholas. For, he considered, if, since she already believed her ancestor to be a pirate, he proved to her that he was indeed such, then Nicholas must be acquitted in her mind for having himself removed and hidden away that which did not belong to him. So they, having reached the house, sat themselves down to the narrative, he to read and she to listen. They were no longer able to sit upon the verandah since the rain now beat down pitilessly and as though

it never meant to cease, and the wind, even in the middle of the little island, was very boisterous. And so, when the jalousies had been fastened tightly to prevent the flapping they had previously made, Reginald began Nicholas's story, prefacing it with the account of how it had been found.

It was about ten o'clock in the day when this young couple, who had so strangely been brought together in this island, began that story—for they met and parted early; it was nearly nightfall when Reginald arrived at the description of how Alderly died singing his drunken song. And amidst the swift-coming darkness—a darkness made more intense by the heavy pall of clouds that hung above the island—there seemed to come over them both that feeling of creepiness, of melancholy horror, which Nicholas had described himself as becoming overwhelmed with.

The girl seemed far more overcome by this feeling than Reginald was. She started again and again at every fresh gust that shook the frail fabric in which she dwelt, her eyes stared fixedly before her as though she saw the spectre of her pirate ancestor rising up, and once she begged him to desist for a moment from his reading.

"It was below here," she whispered, "below the very spot where we sit, that that wretch, that murderous villain, died in his sin. Oh! it is horrible! horrible to think that we have all lived here so long, that I was born here. Horrible!"

"Barbara," said Reginald, "do not regard it so seriously. I was wrong to read you all I have—yet,

think. Think! It is two hundred years since it all happened—we have nothing to do with that long-buried past.”

“Yes, yes,” she said. “I know that we have not. Yet—yet—this is the very spot—the very place. That makes it all so much more horrible, so much more ghostly. And to-night, I know not why, I feel as I have never felt before, nervous, frightened, alarmed, as though at some danger near at hand. Let me light the lamp ere you continue.”

“It is the storm has made you nervous,” he replied, trying to soothe her while he assisted her to arrange the lamp. “The air, too, is charged with electricity—that alone will unstring your nerves, to say nothing of the darkness and the noise of the tempest. I have done wrong, Barbara; I have selected the worst time for reading this horrible story to you. I should have chosen one of the bright days when we could sit on the crags and have nothing but the brilliant sun about and over us.”

She glanced up at him with a smile in her clear eyes—the smile that never failed to make him think that he had lit on some woman belonging to another world than his, it was so full of innocence as well as a simple trust that would have well befitted a little child—and laid her hand upon his arm as though to assure him that he had done nothing to affright her. But, as she did so, there came a terrific flash of lightning which illuminated all the tropical wood outside—as they could see through the slats of the jalousie—and then a roar of thunder that made the girl scream and let fall the lamp just lighted.

But Reginald caught it deftly, and placing it on the table said with a smile—

“It would never do for another lamp to be overturned here as one was so long ago. Come, Barbara, cheer up, take heart! We will read no more to-night.”

“Yes, yes,” she exclaimed. “Read. Go on reading and finish your story. Besides, we must do something to pass the night—you cannot go to your yacht, and I—I—; for the first time in my life I fear to be alone. I dread, though I know not what. I have been alone night after night here for even weeks and months together, and never feared anything. Yet, now, I am afraid. Pray, do not leave me to-night.”

He looked at her, admiring, almost worshipping her for the innocence she showed in every word she spoke, and then he said—

“Have no fear, I will not leave you if you wish it. But, Barbara, we must do something else to pass the hours away than read old Nicholas’s story. What shall we do? Let us have a game of cards.”

There were some packs in her house that they had played with before now—cards brought from other islands by her dissolute brother, with which to pass the long nights in, as she frankly owned, trying to get the better of his father; but she would not play now.

“No,” she said. “Let us come to the end of the tale. I cannot rest until I have heard it all. Do, do finish it.”

“Very well, if you will,” he answered. “And,

at any rate, the worst is told. There is nothing more to shock or affright you. Nothing but the burying of the treasure in the spot where it now lies, and where we will dig it up."

The jealousies rattled as he spoke—yet at this moment the wind had ceased, and nought was heard but the steady downpour of the rain.

But, perhaps because of the incessant noise the storm had made for some hours, neither of them noticed this peculiar incident, though Reginald glanced up as the blind stirred.

Then he began again, reading on through Nicholas's strange story, and doing so with particular emphasis, so that she might grasp every word of his description as he told how the measurements were to be taken in the middle Key. And Barbara sat there listening silently. Yet, as he turned a leaf—having now got to that part of the account where Nicholas was picked up by the *Virgin Prize*—he paused in astonishment at the appearance of her face.

For she was gazing straight before her at the jalousie, her eyes opened to their widest, her features drawn as though in fright, her face almost distorted.

"Look! Look!" she gasped. "Look at the blind."

And he, following her glance, was for the moment appalled too.

A large hand was grasping half-a-dozen of the slats in its clutch; between those slats a pair of human eyes were twinkling as they peered into the room.

As Reginald rose to rush at the intruder, whoever

he was, Barbara gave another gasp and fell back fainting into her chair; and then, before her companion could ask the owner of those eyes what he meant by his intrusion, the blinds were roughly thrust aside, and, following this, there came a man of great size, from whom the water dripped as from a dog who had just quitted a river—a man whose face was all bruised and discoloured as though he had been badly beaten.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE ISLAND'S OWNER.

"Who are you, and what do you want?" asked Reginald, confronting the intruder; while, as he spoke, he observed that the coarse and scanty clothes in which he was clad were drenched with more water than even the heavens could have poured on him.

He was a man of great bulk, young as himself, and with a mass of reddish-yellow hair that hung about his face, matted and dishevelled from the wet in which it was soaked; and as he advanced into the room the water dripped off him on to the floor.

"Want!" he replied, "want! What should a man want in his own house but rest and comfort after a storm? Master, this is my house! I had best ask what you want here? And at night—alone with my sister."

Yet he did not pause for an answer, but going up to where that sister lay back in the swoon that had overcome her, he shook her roughly by the shoulder and called out—

"Come, get over your fit. I have bad news for you."

"Be a little more gentle with her!" Reginald exclaimed. "We can bring her to in a better manner than that;" and as he spoke he went to the spirit flask he had brought up from the yacht, and moistened

her lips with some of the whisky, and bathed her forehead with water from one of the calabashes.

"What the devil is the matter with the girl?" asked her brother. "She has never been used to indulging in such weaknesses—what does it mean?"

"It means," the other replied, "that the storm has frightened her."

"Bah! she has seen plenty of them since she was born. We are used to storms here."

"And also," Reginald went on, "she saw a man—you—outside, listening to us. She saw your hand on the blind and your face through the slats, but did not recognise you. It is not strange that she should be frightened."

But by this time Barbara was coming round—she opened her eyes as her brother spoke, then closed them again, as though the sight of him was horrible to her, and shivered a little. But, after a moment, she opened them once more, and, fixing them on him, said—

"You have come back. Where is father?"

"He is dead," he said, using no tone of regret as he spoke, and, indeed, speaking as he might have done of the death of some stranger. "He is dead not an hour ago. The storm drove us here, brought us home. But as we reached the shore, for we could not get round to the creek, the breakers flung our boat over, and us out of it. I was fortunate enough to scramble on land, but the old man had no such luck. He was carried out to sea again, and I saw no more of him."

Barbara had burst into tears at the first intimation

of her father's death, and now she wept silently, her brother sitting regarding her calmly while he sipped at Reginald's flask as though it were his own!—and the latter felt his whole heart go out to her in sympathy. Yet—how could he comfort her? The one whose place it was to do that was now by her side, but being a rough, uncouth brute, as it was easy to see he was, he neither offered to do so, nor, it seemed probable, would he have done aught but mock at any kind words Reginald might speak.

“Father! Father!” the girl sobbed. “Oh, father! And I have been looking forward so much to your return—hoping so much from it. Thinking how happy we might be.”

Her brother—who seemed to consider that, after having told her of old Alderly's death, no further remark on the subject was necessary, and who, if he knew what sympathy meant, certainly did not consider it needful to exhibit any—had by now turned his back to them and, going to a cupboard, was busily engaged in foraging in it. Reginald had seen Barbara take food out of this cupboard ere this, both for him and for herself—food consisting of dried goat's flesh, cheese and other simple things—and therefore he was not surprised at the man doing so now. But he was somewhat surprised at hearing Barbara, while her brother's back was turned, whisper to him—

“Say nothing at present about the Key.”

He nodded, willing to take his line of action from her in anything she might suggest in the circumstances which had now arisen; yet he felt that his silence would make his presence there still more inexplicable.

But, also, his trust was so firm in the girl that without hesitation he determined to do as he was bidden.

Presently her brother turned away from the cupboard, coming towards them again and bearing in one hand a piece of coarse bread and, in the other, a scrap of meat he had found.

"Been here long keeping Barbara company?" he asked, while his twinkling eyes—how unlike hers! Reginald thought—glistened maliciously. "We don't often get visitors here."

"Indeed," Reginald replied; "I have heard differently. I was told in Tortola that curiosity about the strange history of your island brought many people here. And, having a little yacht which I have hired and being a sailor myself, I ventured to pay a visit."

"Sailor, eh? What line? American and—but, there, it's easy enough to see you're a Britisher. What is it? Royal Mail, eh?"

"I am in the Royal Navy. A lieutenant. And my name's Crafer."

"Crafer, eh? and in the Royal Navy? I don't think much of the Royal Navy myself. A damned sight too condescending in their ways, as a rule, are the gentlemen in your line—that is, when they take any notice of you at all. Well, if you're going to stay I hope you're not like that. And my name's Alderly—Joseph Alderly. That's good enough for me."

"I certainly did hope to stay a little longer. I am on leave and like cruising about."

"Your boat's in the river, you say?"

"Yes."

"Why don't you live in it instead of in this house,

then? Or at Tortola, where there is a hotel? In some of the islands hereabouts my sister would get a bad name if it was known she was entertaining young English officers all alone."

At his words Reginald sprang to his feet, Barbara also rising, her hazel eyes, that were usually so soft and innocent, flashing indignant glances at her brutal brother.

"You don't know, you don't understand," she began; "if you did you would behave differently. Mr. Crafer has come——" But Reginald was speaking also.

"Mr. Joseph Alderly," he said, "this is the first night I have ever stayed in your house as late as this. I should not be here now were it not for the storm. However, I will trespass upon your hospitality no longer. Miss Alderly, I wish you 'Good-night.'" He touched her hand as he spoke—not knowing what her glance meant to convey, yet feeling sure that there must be much she would have said to him if she had had but the opportunity—and then he turned on his heel, passed through the jalousie, and so out on to the verandah.

The storm was ceasing as he went forth, the clouds were rolling away to the south; around him there were the odours of all the tropical flowers, their perfume increased threefold by the rain. He knew the path so well now from having traversed it many times backwards and forwards from the *Pompeia*, that it took him very little time even in the dark to reach the bank of the river, to unmoor the dinghy, and to get on board the craft. Then, lighting his pipe, he sat himself down in his little cabin to meditate

on what this fresh incident—the arrival of Joseph Alderly—might mean.

“I should know better what to think,” he mused, “if I only knew how long he had been behind the blind. The brute may have been there for sufficient time to have heard all the last instructions of old Nicholas about finding the treasure which I read out. Or he may have heard only enough to give him an inkling that I know where the treasure is. Let me see,” and he put his hand in his pocket and drew forth his forerunner’s narrative.

“Yes,” he muttered, as he turned over the leaves, “yes, I had got far enough—having reached the rescue of Nicholas by the *Virgin Prize*—for him to have heard all if he was there. If he was there; that’s it. Only—was he? or did he come later when there was nothing more to be overheard than the description of Nicholas leaving the island?”

Again he pondered, turning the arrival of Alderly over in his mind, and then he remembered how the jealousies had rattled at a time when the wind had lulled, though he had taken little heed of the fact beyond glancing up from the papers. Yet, as he racked his mind to recall what they had been saying, or he reading, at the moment, he remembered the words he had uttered—

“There is nothing to tell you now but the burying of the treasure in the spot where it lies and where we will dig it up.”

These had been his words, or very similar ones. If Alderly had been there then—if he had arrived on the verandah by the time they were uttered—he knew

all. He had heard the middle Key mentioned, he had heard how the measurements were to be taken, he knew as much as Reginald and Barbara knew. But—had he been there? was it his hand that shook the blind, or was it some light gust of air, a last breath of the storm? That was the question.

Still, independent of this—indeed, far beyond the thought of the treasure, which he had definitely decided he would take no portion of, since it was not, could not be, his by any right—his mind was troubled. Troubled about Barbara and her being alone with the savage creature who was her brother—"Heavens!" he thought, "that they should be the same flesh and blood!"—troubled to think of what form his brutality might take towards her if he suspected that she knew where all the long-sought wealth was hidden away.

"But," he said to himself, as he still sat on smoking, "no harm shall come to her if I can prevent it—if I can! nay, as I will. He may order me out of these moorings since the whole island is his—well, let him. If he does, I will find out Nicholas's cove and anchor myself there—or, better still, I will go and lie off the middle Key. And, by the powers! if he does know that the treasure is there and begins to dig for it, not a penny, not a brass farthing shall he take away without my being by to see that he shares fair and fair alike with his sister. He seems capable, from what I have seen of him and she has told me, of taking the whole lot off to Aspinwall or Porto Rico and losing it in one of his loathsome gambling dens, while he leaves her here alone!"

He went on deck of his little craft as he made these

reflections, and, more from sailor-like habit than aught else—since no one ever came into the river—he trimmed his lights and arranged them for the night, and then went to his cabin and turned in. But before he did so, he cast a glance up to where Barbara's home was, and saw that on the slight eminence there twinkled the rays of the lamp through the now opened windows. All was well, therefore, for this night.

Yet he could not sleep. He could not rest for thinking of the girl up there with no one but that brutal kinsman for a companion ; with no one to help her if he in his violence should attempt to injure her—a thing he would be very likely to do if he questioned her about aught he might have overheard, and she refused to satisfy him.

At last this feeling got too strong for him—so strong that he determined to go and see if all was well with her. Therefore, ashore he went again, and, making his way up quietly through the glade and the little wood, he came within sight and earshot of the hut. And there he soon found that, no matter how fierce and cruel a nature Alderly's was, he at least meant no harm to the girl herself.

She, he could see from the close proximity to the hut which he had attained, was lying asleep upon a low couch on which he had often sat, a couch covered with Osnaburgh cloth and some skins. Alderly was sitting at the table, drinking and smoking and occasionally singing. He had evidently found some liquor of his own—probably stowed away by him ere setting out on his various cruises—and was pouring it out pretty rapidly into the mug he drank from.

“Heavens!” exclaimed Reginald. “How the past repeats itself! Here stand I, a Crafer, watching an Alderly in his cups, even as, two hundred years ago, my relative stood here watching this man’s. And he sings there as he drinks, even as his rascally forerunner sang, too—the one when his father has not been dead many hours, the other when he had murdered a man! And Barbara—well, there is Barbara in place of the fancied Barbara the other conjured up. It is the past all over again, in the very same place, almost the very same hour at night. Let us hope that, as all came well with Nicholas afterwards, so it may with me. And with Barbara, too. Yes, with Barbara, too.”

Whereon, seeing that all was well for the present at any rate, he moved silently away and so regained his boat.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

JOSEPH ALDERLY.

IN the morning, when he woke and went on to the deck of his little craft, he saw Barbara standing on the river's brink—evidently waiting for him to be stirring. Therefore, he at once got into his dinghy and went ashore to her.

"What is he doing now?" he asked, as he took her hand and noticed for the first time the absence of the splendid flush of health upon her face that was generally there. This morning she had dark purple rings under her eyes—as though she had not slept or had been weeping.

"He is asleep now," she said, "after sitting up drinking, singing, and muttering to himself till nearly daybreak. Oh, Mr. Crafer!" she broke off, "what is to be done?"

"What does he know?" asked Reginald in return. "Did he hear any of the story I read to you? How long had he been at the window before you noticed him?"

"I cannot tell. Yet I think he suspects. Before I went to sleep he asked me what brought you here, and whether you were hunting for the treasure, and also what that paper was you were reading to me?"

"And what did you tell him?"

"I would not tell a lie, therefore I said it was an

account of the island, written by a connection of yours who had been here long ago."

"And then?"

"And then he said he would like to see it. He said he was sure you would show it to him."

"Was he! I am sure I shall do nothing of the kind. Yet I do not know," and Reginald broke off to meditate. Following which he went on again. "But he must see it after all. Barbara, the treasure is his and yours. He must be told."

"No, no," she said. "It is not his—it is yours—yours—yours. Oh! it would be wicked, shocking, to think that you, the only person in the world to whom the chance came of finding out where it is hidden, should not be entitled to it, or at least to half of it. And think, too, of the journey you have made, the expense you have been put to, the trouble you have taken. And all for nothing; to get nothing in return."

"I have got something in return," he said. "Your friendship! Have I not, Barbara?"

"Yes," the girl whispered, or almost whispered, while to her cheeks there came back the rose-blush he loved so much to see. "Yes. But what is that in comparison to what you ought to have?"

"Everything," he replied earnestly. "Everything. Far more, perhaps, to me than you think. But now is scarcely the time to tell you how dear that friendship is. Instead, let us think of what is best to be done."

"At present," she replied, "I am sure the best thing is to keep the secret. If he knew it was there

he would get it up somehow—and, I think, he would go away with it. Then you would get nothing.”

“But I want nothing.”

“I don’t care,” she replied. “I am determined you shall have half. Oh! promise me, promise me you will tell him nothing unless he agrees to give you half.”

At first he again refused, and still again, but at last he agreed to her request, or at least so far consented that he said he would make a proposal to her brother. He would suggest that, on his being willing to divide whatever they should find into three parts—one for Alderly, one for Barbara, and one for him—he would inform him where he thought the treasure was buried. But that he would take no more than a third he was quite resolved, he told her.

“It will be useless,” she said, “useless to do that! He will never consent to my having a third; if he did he would take it away from me directly afterwards.”

“Would he!” exclaimed Reginald. “Would he! I would see about that.”

“At any rate, he would try to do so. Therefore, it would be far better for you to insist on one half. By taking one third you would only get a lesser share, while he would get more.”

At last, therefore, Reginald determined he would go and see her brother and, as he said, sound him. Only he was resolved on one thing. Alderly should neither see Nicholas’s manuscript nor be told the exact spot where the buried treasure was until they had come to some terms.

“And, remember,” he said to her, “if I get one

half from him, you take from me what represents one third." To which again the girl protested she would never consent.

After this they parted, she going back to the hut, and he saying he would follow later, since they resolved it would be best to keep the knowledge of their having met that morning from her brother.

When, however, Reginald himself arrived at Alderly's house he found that person gone from it and Barbara alone—standing on the verandah and evidently watching for his coming.

"He has gone down to the shore," she said, "to see if he can find anything of poor father's body. At least that is what he says he has gone for, as well as to see if his boat is capable of being repaired. Alas! I fear he thinks more of the boat than of father's death."

"If he thinks so much of the boat," Reginald remarked, "it scarcely looks as if he has much idea of there being a large treasure to his hand. However, I will go and see him. Where did he come ashore last night?"

"Very near to the Keys," she answered. "Indeed, close by."

So Reginald made his way across the island to that spot, and, when he had descended the crags and reached the small piece of beach there, he saw Alderly engaged in inspecting the wrecked craft which had brought him safely back to his island over-night. It had been at its best but a poor crazy thing—a rough-built cutter of about the same size as the *Pompeia*, but very different as regards its fittings

and accommodation. It was open-decked, with a wretched cabin aft into which those in her might creep for rest and shelter, and with another one forward—but these were all there was to protect them.

“She is badly injured,” Reginald said, after having wished Alderly good-morning and received a surly kind of grunt in reply. “I am afraid there is not much to be done to her.”

“Mister,” said Alderly, suddenly desisting from his inspection, and turning round on the other man without taking any notice of his remark, “I am glad you came here this morning. You and I have got to have some talk together, and we can’t do it better than here.”

“Certainly,” replied Reginald. “What would you like us to talk about?”

“It ain’t what I’d *like* to talk about, but what I am *a-going* to talk about as you’ve got to hear. Now, look you here. I ain’t no scholar like Barb over there—she was sent to school because the old man was a fool—and I’m a plain man. I’ve had to earn my living rough—very rough—and p’raps I’m a bit rough myself. But I’m straight—there ain’t no man in the islands straighter nor what I am.”

“Being so straight, perhaps you will go on with what you have to say. Meanwhile, Mr. Alderly, let me be equally straight with you. Your manner is offensive, and, as you say, ‘very rough.’ Therefore, I may as well tell you that it doesn’t intimidate me. We are both sailors, only I happen to have been in a position of command, while your rank, I gather, has been always more or less of a subordinate one. So, if

you'll kindly remember that I expect civility, we shall get along very well together."

Alderly glanced at him, perhaps calculating the strength of the thews and sinews of so finely built a young man; then he said—

"This is *my* island, you know, mister, and all that's in it."

"Precisely. And you mean that I am in it. Well, so I am. Only, you understand, I can very soon get out of it. The sea isn't yours as well."

"Suppose I wasn't to let you go! Suppose I stopped up the mouth of the river where your craft is a-lying! Then you'd be in it still."

"Yes," said Reginald, "so I should. Only, all the same, I should go when I pleased. I am not a baby—but, there, this is absurd. Say what you want to say."

"Well, I will. What was that paper you was a-reading to my sister in my house last night?"

"A little history of this island, which a forerunner of mine happened to visit some two centuries ago."

"Two cent'ries ago! Oh! It didn't happen to say anything about the treasure old Simon Alderly had stowed away here, did it?"

"Since you ask me so directly, and as it is your business, I will reply at once. It did."

For a moment Alderly's face was a sight to see. First the brown of his face turned to a deeper hue, then the colour receded, leaving him almost livid, then slowly the natural colour returned again, and he said, huskily—

"It did, eh? So I thought, though I don't know why the wench, Barb, told me a lie."

"Are you sure she did tell you a lie? I don't think your sister seems a person of that sort."

"Never mind my sister. Tell me about the treasure—*my* treasure. I am the heir, you know; I am the only Alderly left after two cent'ries hunting for it—you was right about them cent'ries, mister. Two it was. Where is that treasure? Go on, tell me."

"I have not quite made up my mind about doing that," said Reginald. "It remains for me to decide whether I shall do so just yet."

"It remains for you to decide whether you will tell me where my property is! It does, does it? And what else?—what do it remain for me to do?" and he advanced so close to Reginald and looked so threatening, both from his angry glances and his great height and build, that many a man might have been cowed. But not such a man as Reginald Crafer!

"What do it remain for me to do—eh?" he asked again. "To kill you, p'raps."

Reginald's laugh rang out so loud at this that it might have been heard on the Keys outside—the Keys whereon the treasure was. And it made Alderly's fury even greater than before.

"I *could* kill you, mister, easy, if I wanted to. And no one would never know of it except Barb. And if she knowed of it, why, I'd kill her too. Anyhow, I mean to have my fortune."

"As to killing," said Reginald, "I don't quite agree with you. You seem to me a powerful kind of a person, without much knowledge, however, of using that power." Here Alderly stamped with fury. "Therefore, you are not so very terrible. However,

about *your* fortune. To begin with, are you quite sure it is yours?"

"Why! whose else is it if it ain't mine?" the bully asked, stupidly now. "Ain't this island mine now father's dead?"

"You say it is, though I am sure I don't know whether you are telling the truth or not. It might be as much your sister's as yours." Alderly burst out laughing, scornfully this time; but Reginald went on. "Your father might have left a will, you know, leaving her a portion of it, or, indeed, the whole, if he didn't approve of your general behaviour."

Alderly laughed again—though now he looked rather white, the other thought; and then he said emphatically:—

"Father didn't leave no papers. So I'm the heir. Girls don't count, I'm told." All of which—both laughter, pallor, and remarks—led Reginald to form a suspicion that whatever papers the elder Alderly might have left had been destroyed.

"I think they do," said Reginald, "and certainly Miss Alderly counts in my opinion. For, if eventually I decide to tell you where your treasure is, she will have to have her portion."

"She will have her portion," said Alderly decidedly, "which will be that I shall look after her. And I suppose you'll want a portion, too."

"Yes, rather," the other replied, remembering that he had promised to make no stipulations about Barbara. So he corrected himself now, and said, "Of course I suppose you will look after her. Well, remembering that, I shall want one half."

“One half!” exclaimed Alderly, almost shouting out the words in his excitement. “One half! My God! One half of all that treasure! Just for coming here to tell me where it is! Why! you must be mad, Mr. Crafer, or whatever you call yourself. Mad! Mad! Why! sooner than do that I’d fetch a hundred o’ my pals and mates from all around, from the islands and up from Aspinwall and Colon, and dig the whole place up till we found it. One half!”

“And dig the whole place up!” repeated Reginald. “Just so. Only, you know that when your ancestress, the first Barbara, and her son came here they found the treasure had been removed from the place where Simon left it, and none have ever been able to find it since. Isn’t that so?”

“Yes,” muttered Alderly, “it is, damn you!”

“Very well. You don’t own all the islands round, of which there are some scores, inhabited and uninhabited. And, presuming that the treasure in question has been moved to one of these—and there is no one knows whether it has or not but myself” (he determined not to bring Barbara in further than was necessary)—“what good would all the digging of you and your ‘pals and mates’ do in this place, Mr. Alderly?”

To which the other could only answer by a muttered curse.

CHAPTER XXXV.

DANGER IMPENDING.

ALDERLY was now at bay!

For a couple of days he raved, stormed, and alternately endeavoured to extract from Reginald and from his sister a hint as to which of the islands the treasure had been removed to. But it was all of no avail. Barbara, whose gentle nature had conceived almost a hatred against her unnatural brother for the utter indifference he had shown to their father's fate, avoided him as much as she could, and, when not able to do so, refused to acknowledge that she knew anything more than that Mr. Crafer possessed the secret of the hidden store.

While, as for Reginald, he simply said, whenever Alderly sought him out—which the latter did frequently, since the other would go no more to his hut,—“One half is what I want if we dig it up together.”

But to Alderly, who among all his other bad qualities possessed that of inordinate greed, this proposal appeared so enormous that he could not bring himself to consent to it.

“And if we don't dig it up together,” said Reginald, who had not the slightest compunction in playing on the fears and covetousness of the man, “why, I shall have to dig it up by myself—which you cannot prevent my doing if it is not on your property, you know.

Then I shall take it all, except what I hand over to some lawyer, or English representative, in one of the islands for your sister's use."

"But it is mine, mine alone!" the infuriated wretch would exclaim. "Mine, even if it is outside Coffin Island. Simon was my relative, and he found it."

"And Nicholas Crafer was mine," replied the other, "and he found it, too. It belonged to him as much as to Simon, and, what's more, the secret belongs to me and not to you. And as you are a card player and a 'sportsman,' Mr. Alderly, you'll understand what a strong card that is in my favour."

It was so strong a card that Alderly acknowledged to himself in his own phraseology that "he was beat." That is, he was "beat" by fair means, and, being a brute and a savage in whose nature there seemed to run all the worst strains of his ancestor, Simon, he soon took to turning over in his mind how he could win by means that were foul.

And on how these means could be brought about he pondered deeply, roaming round the island as he did so, Barbara's gun under his arm with which to shoot, now and again, a gull or some other equally harmless or useless bird; or sitting on the crags, or the beach when the tide was out, thinking ever. And what he thought about more than anything else was, "How could he obtain possession of that paper which he had seen in Crafer's hand?" For in that paper lay the secret, he felt sure, of the spot to which the treasure, *his* treasure, had been removed.

It may be told here that, although he had been outside the jalousie on the night of the storm which

drove him home, and his father to his doom, for longer than either Barbara or Reginald knew, he had gleaned but a very imperfect knowledge of what the latter had read out. Some words he had caught, such as "when you have taken your first measurement from the spot where you land, you stick in the ground your sword, and then make, or persevere until you make, all your other strides correspond with what I have wrote down." Yet this told nothing. He had not heard nor caught the mention of the Keys, therefore the measurement might apply to any of the scores of little islands in the Virgin Archipelago. Also he had heard Reginald read out from his papers, "now here is a little map, rough as befits a drawing made by me, yet just and true." But of what use was this map—unless he could set eyes on it! Ah! that was it. If he could set eyes on it!

He had heard other sentences, too; a portion of the conclusion of Nicholas Crafer's narrative, but they would not piece together into one explicit whole. He was, indeed, at bay. He knew the treasure had been moved somewhere, and he knew that, in the possession of this fellow who was now in that gimerack yacht in the river, was a description of where the treasure was, as well as a map showing the spot; but he knew no more.

And as he thought it all over, sitting upon a crag, he ground his large white teeth and beat the rock beneath him with the butt of Barbara's gun in his rage. But, at last, it seemed that he had made up his mind, had resolved upon his plan; for with a smothered oath—the use of which expletives he was

very frequent in—he sprang to his feet, while he muttered to himself—

“One half! One half! Ho! Ho! No! Not one half, not one shilling, not one red cent.”

As he rose, there came across the little grassy plateau behind the crag his sister, Barbara. For a moment she paused and glanced at him, and, perhaps because she knew him so well and had studied all his evil moods from infancy, she observed something in his face more evil, more threatening than usual. Then she said—

“I want my gun.”

“What for?”

“There are some large parrots come across from Anegada. You said you wanted some for your supper when next a flock came. See, there are two in the gros-gros down there. Give me the gun,” and taking it from his hand, she cocked it and aimed at the two birds in the palm-tree half-way down the cliff.

“What is the use?” he said roughly. “They will fall into the sea below and we can never get them, it is too deep.”

But ere he could say more she fired, missing her mark, if, indeed, she had aimed at it. Then she uttered an exclamation and dropped the gun, letting it fall a hundred and fifty feet below into the deep sea.

“You fool!” he said, “you infernal fool!” And he looked as though he were going to strike her for her carelessness. “You fool! it was the only firearm we had in the island, and now you have let it go where we can never get it back. Barbara, a beating would

do you good. I have a mind to give you one or fling you over the cliff after it."

"It kicked," she said, "and hurt me. And, after all, it doesn't matter much. It was old and scarcely ever shot straight. I could do nothing with it."

"I could, though," he replied, still scowling at her. "It would shoot what I wanted. That was good enough for me."

And Barbara, as she looked him straight in the eyes, said inwardly to herself—

"I know it would shoot what *you* wanted. That is why it will never shoot again."

He changed the subject after grumbling at and abusing her for some time longer, and said—

"Where's that fellow now, that admirer of yours? I haven't seen him to-day."

"I saw his yacht go out two or three hours ago," she said, treating the remark about Reginald's admiration with infinite contempt—as of late she had treated most of his speeches. "I suppose he has gone for a sail. Or, perhaps, over to Tortola or Anegada to buy himself some food. Since you will not show him much civility, I suppose he does not want to be beholden to you for even so much as a mango or a shaddock."

"I've a mind to put a chain across the river's mouth and stop him ever coming into the river again." But while he spoke he started at a thought that came into his mind, and said—

"My God! Suppose he is gone to the island where he knows the treasure was removed to! Suppose that! And to dig it up and be off with it.

Barbara!" he almost shrieked, "which is that island—where is it?"

"Offer him the fair half he requires," she said, "and find out. That's the best thing you can do."

People who live in civilised places do not often see a man with the temper of a wild beast exhibit that temper. There are many men with such tempers, it is true, in the most enlightened and refined spots; but their surroundings force them into some sort of decency, however much they may be raging inwardly. Here, in Coffin Island, civilisation was, if not non-existent, at least at a discount, and Joseph Alderly, who had the disposition of a tiger without the tiger's redeeming quality—love for its own kind—gave way at Barbara's last remark to such a tempest of fury as would have disgraced that animal. He rushed at his sister, howling, cursing and blaspheming, with the evident intention of hurling her over the cliff, which she—agile as a deer—avoided, so that had he not thrown himself down violently, he must have gone over instead; and then he gave his vile infirmity full swing. Curses on her, on Crafer, even on himself, poured from his mouth; he dug his heels into the earth and kicked stones and pebbles away from him as though they were living creatures which could feel his fury; and all the time he interlarded his blasphemy with such remarks as, "It is mine, mine, mine. I will have it, even though I cut his throat. Mine! mine! mine! One half—my God! One half!"

Thus the savage exhibited his temper without restraint; it was his only manner of doing so. Had

he been an English gentleman, he would probably have had just the same temper, only it would have taken a different shape. He would have browbeaten his wife or female kin, have bullied his servants, and probably kicked his dog. And then, as Alderly soon did, he would have calmed down, feeling much relieved !

Barbara waited until at last he seemed quieter—regarding him with scorn, though not surprise, since she knew his disposition—when she said :

“I don’t think you understand Mr. Crafer. Like all his countrymen he can be very firm, I imagine, and like all English sailors”—and there was a perceptible accentuation of the word “English”—“he seems very brave. You won’t frighten him.”

He still muttered and mumbled to himself—though it seemed to her he was meditating something all through the end of his paroxysm—and at last he said :

“When is he coming back ? I suppose you know.”

“How should I know, and why should he come back ? Your welcome has not been very warm, and, as you say, he may have gone to the other island where the treasure has been removed to.”

Again at this, to him, awful suggestion, it seemed as if his brutal fury was going to break out once more, but this time, by an effort that was no doubt terrific, he calmed himself and was contented to exclaim :

“I don’t believe that ! If he came to fetch it away, why didn’t he do so before now ? There was

no one to interfere with him. You may depend it's all a lie—the treasure's here in my island, and he hasn't dug it up because he couldn't. He was afraid of you before I came back."

"My admirer—and afraid of me! Well!" exclaimed Barbara, with a different note of scorn in her voice now.

"Or he was playing at being your admirer to throw dust in your eyes and get away with it all somehow."

Here Barbara shrugged her shoulders; but even that significant gesture was allowed to pass also without an explosion. He was calming himself, taming himself, she saw plainly, and she guessed at once that he had a reason for what he did. What was that reason? She resolved to know.

"I suppose I must yield," he said, with a strange look in his eyes. "Barbara, we must give in. You go and see him and tell him I'll go halves. Though it's a cruel shame, a wicked shame."

"Is it? I don't think so. He came all the way from England to get it all for himself, and it was only when he found that there were descendants of Simon on the island that he resolved to give it—to share it!" she corrected herself.

"Well, we must do it. But to think of his taking half away! When will he come back?"

"I tell you I don't know."

Her brother again plunged into meditation. Then he said:

"You go down to the mouth of the river and watch till he comes in. You can talk to him better than I

can—you're what they call a lady, I suppose. At any rate, you're edycated. Then tell him what I say—that I'll give in and go shares—that is, if you can't wheedle him into taking less. You're a fine-looking girl, Barbara, as good a looking girl as ever I've seen in Jamaica or Darien, or even up to New York ; if you played your cards right we could get the lot out of him."

The girl shrank away from him with such a look of disgust—for the odious leer upon his face told her quite as plainly as his words did, if not more so, what he meant—that he refrained from continuing. Whatever plot he was maturing—and he was maturing a deep-laid one—he saw that this was not the way to work it. Therefore he continued his instructions.

"Go down and meet him when he comes in. It will be to-night when the tide sets here from Tortola. Then come home and tell me. And to-morrow—" he said the word "to-morrow" slowly, and with a sound in his voice that roused her—"to-morrow, if he's willing, we'll get to work. Now go."

She turned on her heel without a word beyond saying "Very well," and in a moment she was gone, her lithe form disappearing instantly amongst the bamboos and Spanish bayonets, the poinsettias and begonias, that grew up close to the plateau. And beyond the chattering of the aroused *vert-verts* and *Qu'est-ce qu'il dit's*, there was nothing to show that she had set out upon her errand.

He, the savage owner of that beautiful island, sat exactly where he had been sitting so long, still muttering to himself, laughing once or twice, and

repeating over and over again the words, "To-morrow, to-morrow." And as he did so, a pleasing vision came before his eyes, and only once it was marred—by what seemed to be a great wave of blood passing before them. Otherwise, it showed him all that could gladden such a heart as his. A southern gambling-hell with the tables piled with gold, all of which he was winning for himself by the aid of the vast capital he possessed. A gambling-hell with the lights turned down low for coolness, and with iced drinks being passed about to all therein; a place through which the sound of soft music was borne, in which fair-haired women caressed him, and made much of him. Then, next, he saw a verdant hill above a summer sea, a villa with marble steps and corridors; outside, the splashing of fountains amidst the palms around them. And still the golden-haired women were ever present, contending with each other for his favours—his, the wealthiest man in those tropic regions!

That was the vision he saw, before rising and going slowly down the path that led to the beach where his patched-up cutter was moored.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

BEWARE !

THE girl went on her mission willingly enough—indeed, had her brother not ordered her to go and watch for the return of Reginald, she had quite determined in her own mind some time before to seek him out, and to wait for his coming back.

For she, who had observed Joseph carefully all her lifetime, could read his nature as easily as a book ; she knew what those tempests of fury, followed by an enforced self-subduing, meant. Above all, she knew what the sudden determination on his part to share the treasure—or the appearance of sudden determination—meant also. It meant either trickery, or violence, or murder. Most probably the latter !

His greed for money to squander on himself had always been great, even from boyhood. In those days, and before he could earn anything for himself, he would rob his father of small sums, pilfering them from his pocket when he slept, or from places where he kept his earnings ; later on, if a goat or a sheep were taken by him to Tortola and sold, there would be always some dispute about the price obtained, always something missing. And when he was a man the scenes between him and his father, the fights and the ill-treatment to which old Alderly was subjected, were sufficient to make him stand forth in very distinct characters.

Therefore, she knew that he intended something now against Reginald Crafer—she felt perfectly sure that never would her brother allow the latter to become possessed of one-half of whatever buried treasure there might be. What his exact intentions were she could not, of course, make sure. It might be that he meant to watch him, until, in some way, the spot where the treasure was should be revealed, when, by some trickery, Joseph would manage to secure it all; it might be that he had resolved to do the worst and slay him. For, if he could do that, then he would become possessed of the papers which told where the treasure was, and, since he was able to read enough, she thought, to decipher even the crabbed, indistinct characters in the writing, as she had seen them to be, to thus possess himself of all. And she knew, too, that whatever Joseph did would be done by stealth and craft—the only way in which he ever worked when not consumed by his passion—and, therefore, he was doubly to be suspected and guarded against.

All through the warm tropical afternoon she sat on by the bank of the river; it was the very spot, as she knew, or thought she knew, where two centuries ago Simon Alderly had slain the diver—thinking always, and taking no heed of all the multitudinous animal life around her. The humming-birds hovered in front of her, bright specks of gorgeous colour; the butterflies, representing in their brilliant bodies every known hue, flitted backwards and forwards; sometimes a monkey peered at her with wide-open eyes from moriche and bamboo, and insects

of numerous varieties crept about the bush-ropes and the fan-palms, while all around her was the warmth and perfume of the tropics.

Yet she heeded none of these things. They were the accompaniments of the whole of her young existence, and—even had they not been—she would not now have noticed them. Her thoughts were intent on the saving of a human life—a life she had come to love, the life of the handsome Englishman who had journeyed from far-off England to her lonely, desolate home.

Presently she knew that night was at hand, that it was coming swiftly. The atmosphere was all suffused by a rich saffron hue, into which the crimson tints of the sun and the blue of the heavens were being absorbed; the sun itself was sinking over the mount behind her; even the air was cooling and becoming fresher.

“If he would only come,” she whispered to herself; “if he would only come before night falls.”

And then she resolved to go to the mouth of the river and look for him. To do so meant that she must force her way through a hundred yards of undergrowth of cacti and all kinds of clinging creepers; yet she was so anxious to see him and to warn him of the danger in which, she felt sure, he would stand on his return, that she did not hesitate a moment. Therefore she plunged bodily in amongst the luxuriant vegetation, and, after a considerable amount of struggling and a numerous quantity of scratches received, stood at last upon the beach, gazing almost south towards Tortola.

And soon she saw that he was coming back—as she had never doubted he would come: he had not parted from her in a manner that meant a last farewell!—he was very near the island now, not a quarter of a mile away.

Presently he, too, saw her standing there regarding him, and, as he did so, took his handkerchief from his pocket and waved it to her. And five minutes later the *Pompeia* passed in between the river banks, so that they could speak to each other.

“Why! how did you get through the undergrowth, Barbara?” he asked, astonished to see her on the beach, which, from the landing path, was almost inaccessible.

“I wanted to see if you were coming back,” she answered, “and so forced my way.”

“Wait till I have anchored opposite the path,” he said, “and I will come back with the dinghy and bring you off.” And so he passed on to the usual place where he moored the yacht—simply because the path from the hut to the river came down opposite—and then, anchoring, he got into the dinghy and went to fetch her.

“Shall I put you ashore,” he asked, “or will you come on board?”

“On board,” she said; “we can talk better there. Ashore there may be ears hidden behind any palm or under any bush. Take me on board.”

He looked at her with one swift glance, wondering what could have happened now, but he said nothing; and after a few strokes they stood on the deck of his little craft. Then he brought her a tiny deck-chair

and bade her be seated, while he leaned against the gunwale by her side.

"What is it, Barbara?" he asked, looking down at her. "What is it now?"

"I do not know," she said, speaking very low and casting glances over to the bank of the river, as though doubting whether that other one might not be hidden somewhere beneath the thick foliage of the shore. "Yet, Mr. Crafer, I fear."

"For what?"

"For you. He is meditating something. I am sure of it. He has bidden me come to you and say that, to-morrow, he will agree to share the treasure with you if you will show him where it is. No," she went on, seeing a smile appear upon Reginald's face, "no, it is not so simple an ending as you think. I am certain—I feel positively sure from what I know of him—that he means to do nothing of the kind."

"Then why the suggestion?" he asked. "What is the use of it?"

"To gain time, to have the night in which to think over and work out some scheme. Perhaps," she said, leaning a little forward to him in her earnestness, so that, even in the now swift-coming darkness, he could see her large starry eyes quite clearly, "to have the night in which to attempt some injury to you. Oh! Mr. Crafer, for God's sake be on your guard. You do not know him as I do."

"Have no fear," he said, touching her hand gently, as though in thanks for her warning, "have no fear. Yet I will be careful. But what can he do to-night,

even if he wished to do harm? I am as safe here in this little yacht as in a castle."

"You do not know. With him one can never tell what he is thinking of doing—what his designs are. His life has been terribly rough, and he has lived among lawless people and in lawless places. And his desire for wealth is such that, knowing your life is the only thing that stands between him and a great sum of money, as he believes, he would hesitate at nothing. No! Not even at taking that life."

Then she told him of the incident of the gun, and how she had let it fall into the sea so as to put it—the only firearm in the place—out of harm's way. He thanked her again for this precaution for his safety, and then she said that she must go. It was dark now, and doubtless her brother would be waiting for Reginald's answer, since she thought it very probable that he was quite as well aware that the *Pompeia* was once again anchored in the river as she was herself.

"Heaven bless you, Barbara, for your kindly, generous nature, and, above all, for your thought for me," Reginald exclaimed. "That I shall remember it always you cannot doubt. And be sure I will be very careful, even here, aboard. Though I do not see what he can do. Our old friend, Simon, would have attacked Nicholas openly if the circumstances had been similar, and they would have fought it out to the grim death. Your brother can't do that, and—short of an open fight in the river—he can do nothing. Therefore, Barbara, have no fear for me. And I am armed, too. See!" and with a smile he

showed her a neat little revolver—one of Webley's New Express—a powerful weapon, though light and handy.

"God grant it may not come to that!" she answered, with a shudder. "Bad as he is, it would break my heart if he should die at your hands."

"It shall not come to that," Reginald replied. "I only showed it to you to ease your mind. And you may be sure that since he has no firearms I would not use one on him."

Then, as he put her ashore in the dinghy he said that, of course, she would tell her brother that he was willing to come to terms. "That is," he explained, "to go halves. Which halves mean that I am looking after your interests, you know, and——"

"Pray, pray," she interposed, "do not let us even think of such things now. If I have misjudged him, as I hope most earnestly I have, then there will be time to talk about shares and so forth. If I have read him aright——" but here she broke off with a little shiver, and, holding out her hand to him as they stood on the river's brink, wished him "Good-night."

"Good-night!" he exclaimed. "Good-night! Why, surely, I may accompany you part of the way at least? I always do so when we are any distance from your home."

"No," she answered, "no. Go back at once to your yacht. At once, I say, and get on board her. Oh! if you did but know the terror I am in for your safety."

"Barbara!" he exclaimed. "Barbara! Why! it is a dream, a fantasy——"

"No," she said, "no. It is no dream, no fantasy. For my sake, for my sake, I beseech you—go back and make yourself secure. Believe me, I know him!" and she turned as though to run up the slight ascent.

"For your sake, then, I will," he said. "For your sake. We will meet to-morrow. Good-night, Barbara." Then he suddenly asked, anxiously—"But you—there is no danger to you?"

"No! no! Good-night," she said, "God keep you. Oh! this dread is terrible," and then, giving him a sign to go without further loss of time, she sped up the path.

He did not share at all in Barbara's dread of her brother, perhaps because he was a man, and, perhaps, also, because he had not been used to witnessing years of violence on that brother's part; indeed, he believed her terrors to be purely feminine—the terrors that many women feel in all parts of the world for that worst of despots, the domestic tyrant. But being neither vain nor conceited, he did not for one moment associate those terrors with any regard she had allowed herself to conceive for him, nor, thereby, make allowances for them in that way. Indeed, he had very little idea that she regarded him as anything more than a stranger, who, by the peculiar knowledge he possessed of the buried wealth, was far more interesting than the few tourists were who sometimes visited Coffin Island. Yet he forgot she allowed him to call her Barbara, while always herself addressing him with formality.

He was not, however, so foolhardy as to neglect a

caution given him by one who was not only interested in him but, also, thoroughly well acquainted with the scheming and violently dangerous nature of Joseph Alderly. He therefore, on regaining the deck of the *Pompeia*, took such precautions as were possible. He drew up the little dinghy from the water and placed it on the deck parallel with the port side, and, when he entered his cabin, he was careful to leave the door open so that any outside sounds from either the river or the banks would be plainly heard.

Then—since there was no more to be done—he went into the cabin and, mixing himself some whisky and water, prepared to watch as long as he could keep his eyes open, making one sacrifice to the supposed necessity for a caution in so far that he decided not to lie down during the night.

“There is nothing else to do,” he reflected; “hardly any danger to ward off. He can’t make such an attack on me as I suggested his ancestor, Simon, would very likely have done, and there is no other way possible, for he cannot get on board without my knowing it, and, if he could, I am as good a man as he!”

Yet still he determined to watch carefully until at least the dawn had come; for then would be sufficient time to begin considering how he should meet Alderly and arrange for digging up the buried treasure.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

“AND DEATH THE END OF ALL.”

IT was a particularly dark night and all was very calm. The moon did not top the eastern bank of the river until long past midnight, and the stars gave but little light. Also, the silence was extreme. Sometimes, it is true, he could hear the rustling of birds and small animals in the luxuriant vegetation on either bank, or catch the whisper of the soft night breezes among the *gros-gros*, the *moriches*, and the great leaves of the green bananas; but that was all. And sparkling all around him, as they whirled in their evolutions, were the myriads of fireflies that make every tropical acre of ground look like an illuminated garden; but, beyond these and the dim stars above the opening between the two banks, there was nothing else to be seen. Even the great trunks of the trees were shrouded in gloom, and seemed nothing but dense patches on the sombre background.

Reginald sat on in his cabin, his pipe in his mouth, his tumbler by his side, the portholes and the door open for coolness and also for precaution's sake. And on the table upon which he leant his elbows there lay the revolver. He had promised, voluntarily promised Barbara, he would not use the weapon upon her brother, who had none; yet he did not know but that, should a crisis come, he might have occasion to

do so. If Alderly were the scheming scoundrel the unhappy girl believed him to be, then it was by no means unlikely that he, too, might possess, secretly, a similar pistol which he had carefully kept her in ignorance of. Or, since he was so big and powerful, if by any chance he could board the *Pompeia*—as he might do by swimming from one of the banks—it might come to a hand-to-hand fight, in which Alderly would possibly be armed with other weapons, and thereby force Reginald to use his own. But he was resolved there should be no use of it unless absolutely necessary.

“How quiet it all is,” he meditated, as he sat there, “how undisturbed. Surely Barbara had no need for fear on my account! Why, Nicholas could hardly have been more secure when he had the island all to himself after Simon Alderly’s death, than I am now.”

And this thought set his mind off into another train, a reflection of the similarity there was between him and his kinsman, and between their actions in this spot—in spite of two hundred years having rolled away.

“Nicholas had his galliot anchored here,” he thought; “perhaps in the very spot where I am now. He, too, used the path up to the hut—not far away from here the Snow was sunk—and—and—and——” He gave a start and shook himself. He had nearly fallen asleep! He was very tired, for the day had been a long one, what with sailing back from Tortola—to which he had gone, as Barbara surmised, to purchase provisions—and his having been now awake and on the stretch for more than eighteen hours.

Therefore, to try and arouse himself, he went on to the deck of the *Pompeia*, and inhaled the fresh night air as he peered all around. But there was nothing to be seen, nothing. Nor, had there been anything out of the ordinary, could he have seen it. The darkness was intense.

He sat down again on the locker which ran round the cabin and formed a seat, sitting bolt upright this time to prevent sleep coming upon him, though all the while he kept telling himself that such precaution was unnecessary. Alderly was safe asleep in his own house, he felt sure, or was sitting up drinking and carousing by himself, as, so Barbara told him, was always his habit. He would sit and drink, she had said, and smoke, and as often as not play a game of cards by himself with an imaginary opponent, and go on doing so far into the night. Then, when at last he was exhausted and could drink no more, he would roll off his chair on to the floor, and so lie there and sleep off his nightly debauch. He was doubtless doing that now.

As Reginald pondered thus, he again let his elbows rest on the table and put his head in his hands.

“The air is so hot!” he murmured, unloosing his flannel shirt-collar as he did so, “so hot! And—there—is—no—danger. Yet I promised her,” again rousing himself, “yet—yet—Alderly stabbed the diver—if he had had a revolver—in the casket—Barbara——”

He was asleep. Asleep peacefully, though wearily, worn out with his long day; and presently there was no noise in all the tranquil night but the sound of his regular breathing, and the ripple of the little river

against the bows of the *Pompeia*, as it flowed down to the sea.

Yet once he started from his slumbers, hearing in them, as he thought, a distant shriek, and hastily went on deck, wondering if aught could have befallen the girl up at the hut, but only to find that it was some night bird that had alarmed him. For in the woods, away up towards where the Alderlys dwelt, he could hear the macaws chattering—the birds which occasionally passed from one island to another—and an owl hooting.

“It is nothing,” he said wearily, “nothing. My nerves are overstrung—I have heard such sounds often at night since I have been here. It is nothing. They are fast asleep enough up there. And—and—I need watch no longer.”

So, utterly overcome now by the desire for slumber that had seized upon him, and not more than half awakened even by the visit to the deck, he stretched himself out at full length on the locker to get an hour or so of rest. Yet he was careful to place the revolver near to his hand.

It wanted still an hour to the time when the moon would be above the fronds of the tallest palms on the eastern bank—a time at which even all the insect life of the island seemed at last to be hushed to rest—when, to the ripple of the river and its soft lap against the yacht’s forefoot, was added another sound—the sound, subdued, it is true, yet still one that would have been perceptible to anyone who was awake in that yacht—of something disturbing, something passing through the waters ; but, had the sleeper awakened

to hear it, he could have seen nothing. All was still too dark, too profound.

But he himself was seen—seen by a pair of gleaming eyes staring at him through the cabin window, the blinds of which had not been drawn, nor the latchwork closed ; a pair of eyes that glistened from out a face over which the hair, all dank and matted with water, curled in masses. The face of Joseph Alderly !

Presently an arm came through the cabin window, an arm long, bare, and muscular, the hand stretched to its fullest length, the fingers sinuous as all powerful fingers are, and striving to reach the pistol on the table, across the body of the sleeping man. Yet soon they desisted ; they were half a foot off where the weapon lay ; any effort to project more of that arm into the cabin would almost certainly awake the sleeper. So arm and hand were withdrawn, and again the evil face of Alderly gazed down upon Reginald Crafer. Once, too, the hand that had failed in its endeavour sought its owner's breast pocket, and drew forth a long glittering knife ; once through the open window it raised that knife over the other's throat—all open and bare as it was !—and then the hand was drawn back, the face and arm were withdrawn ; the villain had disappeared.

And still Reginald slept on, unknowing how near to death he had been, how near to having the shining weapon driven through his throat. Slept on and heard nothing. Slept on while the lamp hanging in the cabin burnt itself out—he had not fed and trimmed it over-night—and until, above, through the fan-like

leaves of palm, bamboo, and cyclanthus, there stole a ray of moonlight that shone down directly on the sleeping man's features.

Half an hour later he began to turn restlessly, to mutter to himself—perhaps it was the flooding of the rays of the now fully uprisen moon upon his face that was awaking him—and, gradually, to return to the knowledge of where he was. Yet still he could not for a moment understand matters—the lamp was burning brightly when he went to sleep, and all was dark as pitch outside; now the cabin was illuminated by the moon, and all outside was light. Then he recognised he had been asleep, and also that he was in his yacht.

He turned round to get up and go on deck to see if day was breaking, and, as he did so and put his feet to the cabin floor, he started. It was covered with water—*water a foot deep*—half up to his knees. Looking down, he perceived it shining in the rays of the moon as a large body of water always shines beneath those rays.

“Heavens!” he exclaimed, “she is filling, sinking! She will not float another ten minutes; the water is almost flush with her deck already.” And he rushed to the cabin door.

He had left that door open ere he slept, he felt positive. Now it was shut.

“She has listed a bit, perhaps,” was the first thought that came to his mind. Yet in another moment that idea was dispelled. The *Pompeia* was sinking on as even a keel as did ever any water-logged boat; there was no list in her. Then, almost feeling

sure o what he would discover a moment later, he tried to open the door.

It was fast.

“I knew it,” he muttered through his teeth, as he shook and banged at the door—there was no time to be wasted ; even now the water was on a level with the top of the locker on which he had lately slept ; a few more minutes and the yacht must sink—“ I knew it. It is the whole history over again. Phips was locked in his cabin—damn the door and he who closed it!—and I am locked in here to sink with the boat and be drowned like a rat. There’s no chance—a child could scarcely escape through those windows ! Oh ! Joseph Alderly, if I ever——”

He stopped. Across the stream, from down by the mouth of it, there came the most awful, blood-curdling cry he had ever heard, the death cry of one who knew he was uttering his last shriek, knew that his doom was fixed. A horrid shriek, followed by the words, “ Help ! help ! ”—and then silence—dense as before.

“ Ay ! call for help,” muttered Reginald. “ Whoever you are, you do not want it more than I. Another five minutes and the end will have come.”

He looked round the cabin in hope of some means of escape presenting themselves, and his eyes lighted on the revolver. Then he knew that, if he were but accorded time, only a few moments, he might get free. But more than two or three such moments would not be his ; the water was nearly to his waist now. Once, twice, thrice, the report of the pistol rang out from that doomed yacht, each shot shattering the lock and panels ; and then one sturdy push was sufficient to

force the door open against the water, and for him to be standing half in the river, half out; and at that instant he felt a heaving beneath his feet, he felt he was sinking to his shoulders, that he was swimming with nothing beneath him any longer. The yacht was gone; he had not been a minute too soon!

The current was strong—the river being swollen with the recent rains—and it bore him downwards to the mouth, he not struggling against it, as he knew very well that he could easily land on the sea-beach outside. So he went with the tide until gradually he reached the outlet, and there he saw a sight that might well affright him, even after what he had gone through. He saw the face of Alderly on the waters, an awful look of fear in the wide-open eyes, and the jaws tightly clenched, but with the lips drawn back from the white teeth on which the moon's rays glistened. And he saw that he was dead.

"My God!" he exclaimed. "How has he died?" And as he so pondered he swam towards the villain, whose head bobbed about on the water as though there were no limbs, nor even trunk, beneath. But all the time as it turned round and round the eyes gleamed with a horrible light under the moon, and the great strong teeth glistened behind the drawn lips.

Another moment, and he knew how Alderly had died. The water in which he swam towards him tasted saltier than sea-water as it touched his lips, and its clearness was discoloured—crimson! And even as Reginald seized the head of the now limbless trunk and towed it to the bank, striking out with all his power for fear of a similar dreadful fate befalling him

—which was probable enough, since the shark is, like the tiger, eager for more when once its taste is whetted—he thought to himself:

“Out of the depths, out of the depths the past rises again and again.”

Then, sweating with fear, he gave one last masterful side-stroke and landed safely on the shingle, dragging his gory burden after him

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE OWNER OF THE TREASURE.

THE white shark—for such it is which is the most terrible in these regions—that had taken both Alderly's legs off above the knee, so that he must have soon bled to death, had doubtless done so while his intended victim was escaping from the trap he had set for Reginald.

Each bite—for the brute must have given two—was as clean as though the limbs had been snipped off by a pair of blunt scissors, and, as Reginald regarded the mangled trunk in the moonlight, he could not but thank his Maker that he had not been the next victim, for he recognised how narrow his own escape was. His experience as a sailor told him that where the sharks have found one prey they will, sometimes for weeks, hover about in expectation of another, and he could only wonder—while his wonder was tinged with devout gratitude—why he should not also by now be torn in half.

As he dragged the body up the slope of the shingle, meaning to cover it over with palm leaves until Barbara had seen the face—the lower part she must not be allowed to see—and then to bury it, a bundle of papers fell out of the pocket of the dead man's rough shirt, which he picked up and put in his own. It must be handed to Barbara, he reflected,

who was now the last of the Alderlys, and consequently the heiress to all the wealth of the Key!

"Which is," reflected Reginald, "the very best thing that could possibly have happened. She will now be able to lead the life so beautiful a woman ought to lead, a life which she by her education and womanly ideas is fitted to lead. For her, nothing could be better than Alderly's death."

Yet, when he thought of her inexperience—had she not believed that Trinidad was the world!—and of how she was all alone now without kith or kin, he could not but wonder what would become of her.

"At least," he pondered, "I pray she may fall into the hands of no such an adventurer as this," and he glanced at Alderly's mangled body. "That would be too awful. Better anything than that, even to finding her fortune gone when we dig up the Key. Though that would be a strange climax, too, to all that has taken place. Gone! great heavens, what an idea! To think of it! To think that when we go to unearth it we may discover there is nothing to be got. The very thought makes my blood run cold. But—bah! it is nonsense. It must be there!"

His blood was running cold, though not from this idea which had come into his mind, but from the wetting he had received.

Therefore, as soon as the sun burst upon the island once more, he stripped himself of his clothes, and, laying them out to dry, proceeded to dry himself also by the old-fashioned method of running up and down the beach. Then, when but a short exposure of his garments to the sun had sufficed to render them

once more wearable, he put them on again and set out for Barbara's home.

"Though," he said to himself, "it is no easy task to break such news to her. Alderly was not kind to her, and she knew his failings and despised him—yet he was her brother, and his death was awful. But it must be told."

He made his way with the usual difficulty through all the entanglement of the luxuriant vegetation that grew down to the beach, and at last reached the path leading to the hut. Indeed, he was eager to get there in spite of the fact that he had such dismal news to break to Barbara, since he was somewhat surprised that he had neither seen nor heard anything of her now. He had almost feared to denude himself of his clothes at daybreak, thinking that at any moment the girl might come down to him—it being her custom to rise at that time—and when an hour had passed, as it had now done, he was still more astonished at not seeing her. She must know by now that her brother was not in his house; she must have known long ago that he had not sat up carousing far into the night as was his habit. Where was she? What could have happened?

His fears became intensified as her house came into sight. For he soon perceived that the jalousies were not opened, and that the door on the verandah was closed—a thing he had never known before to be the case, from daybreak until late night—nay, worse, more appalling than all to him, was to see that behind the slats of the jalousie of the front room there was a light burning—the light of the lamp that

stood always on the table in the middle of the living-room.

Springing up the wooden steps leading to the verandah, he rattled the slats in great agitation, and called loudly, "Barbara! Barbara, are you there?" a summons which, he thanked Heaven, instantly produced a reply. He heard the bark of her dog, who knew him well now; but no answer came from her.

Unable to bear any further suspense, fearing the worst, namely, that her brother had murdered her before he set forth on his attempt to do as much for him, and remembering—fool that he was, as he called himself!—the shriek he had heard in the night and attributed to some of the disturbed denizens of the island, he tore the jalousie aside and entered the general room.

And then he knew why Barbara had not come to seek him at daybreak as was her wont.

She was lying on the lounge, or rude sofa, her hands bound in front of her, her feet tied together, and in her mouth a rude gag made of a coarse pocket-handkerchief. By her side was the dog, moaning and whimpering, but making, when he entered, an attempt to jump up and fondle him. It also was tied, to the foot of the couch.

"Oh! Barbara!" he exclaimed, rushing forward to her, while he saw with infinite thanks that her eyes were open, and that she seemed to have suffered no further brutality than being made a prisoner of. "Oh! Barbara! that he should have treated you so!"

Then in a moment he had taken the gag from her

mouth and had set her free, while all the time he was speaking kindly and considerately to her, and pitying her for having been so treated. And her first words were :

“Thank God, you are alive ! I have been picturing you to myself for hours as dead. Did he not try to kill you ?”

“Yes, Barbara,” he said, after a moment’s pause, almost dreading to tell her the tale, yet recognising that he must do so. “Yes, he tried to kill me.”

“How ?”

“By drowning. He must have bored some holes in the yacht unknown to me, when I slept. Oh ! Barbara ! I know I promised to keep careful watch, yet I was so tired, and at last I fell asleep. When I awoke the yacht was full of water—was sinking. Then——” he hesitated to tell her of how he had been locked in the cabin—“I—I escaped—I swam for my life.”

“And he ?” she asked faintly, almost in a whisper. “What of him ?”

“He is dead.”

“Ah ! yes,” she replied, with a shiver. “I know. I heard the report of your revolver. Then I knew all. Oh ! how I wish he had not died at your hands !”

“He did not die at my hands, Barbara. He was dr—— ; he died in the water.”

“Tell me all,” she said, still faintly. “Tell me all.”

Therefore he told her the whole of the dreadful story, omitting only the most blackening act, the double treachery and attempt of Alderly to take his life without giving him one chance of escape.

"I never thought to see you again," she whispered, when his recital was finished. "Never, never. For," she went on, telling now her experiences, "I knew by midnight that what I had dreaded he would attempt was about to take place. At that hour he left off drinking, having taken much less than was usual all the evening, and rising he went to the cupboard, from which, though he thought I could not do so, I saw him take out his long knife. It was one he brought back from Uruguay, from Paysandu, where they slaughter the oxen wholesale. I have heard him say more than once that it was too good to slay beasts with, and more fit to use on men—and once he drew it upon father. So that I knew he meant ill to you. Then I tried to escape to give you warning, only he would not let me. He seized me, tied me as you saw, and gagged me, though I shrieked once, hoping to alarm you—indeed, he threatened to kill me. And, at last, after he had also tied the dog—he would have slain that too, I feel sure, had it uttered one cry—he left me to the horrors of the night. Without one word he went away, not even saying when he would return. And," the girl concluded, "when I heard your pistol shots I fainted from fear—fear of what was going on. Oh! thank God, thank God, that he did not murder you—that you were not obliged to take his life in self-defence."

"I am thankful, too," he said; "above all things, thankful for your sake." After which he added, "Now, Barbara, would it not be best for you to come with me and see his body? I must bury it, you know, and then I ought to go over to Tortola and tell

the Commissioner. I suppose he should be informed of his death."

"I suppose so," she said. "Only—how are you to go? The yacht is lost."

"There is his own boat. Where is that?"

But Barbara could not tell him, and soon after he found out. But now he prepared to go back to the beach to bury her brother's body, and he was not altogether surprised when she refused to accompany him.

"You have told me he is dead and how he died," she said. "That is enough—what more can I need? And for himself—oh! why should I see him? He never cared for me as a brother should, his last act was one of cruelty to me, and he went forth to murder you. Moreover, he was callous about father's death, did indeed rejoice in it, I believe, because by it he became master of the place. No, I will not go and see him; I could not bear to look upon him again. And," she concluded, "my only regret is that you should have the task of burying him. It would have been better almost had he sunk to the bottom of the river."

Therefore Reginald went off upon this duty, but before he did so he gave to Barbara the water-soaked packet of papers which he had taken from Alderly's shirt-pocket.

"They fell out," he said, "after I had brought him ashore. There was nothing else. The knife you speak of must have sunk to the bottom; perhaps he even tried to defend himself against the shark with it in his last moments. We shall never know!"

Nor did he ever know how that long Uruguay knife had once been nearly thrust into his breast as he lay sleeping; nor that with the knife, which had, indeed, sunk to the bottom of the river, had also sunk the auger with which he had bored half-a-dozen holes (each of the circumference of an ordinary cork) in the bottom of the *Pompeia*. One thing did, however, strike him as strange as he meditated over it all, namely, that from the time when Alderly must have bored those holes in the yacht to the time when she sank a considerable period had undoubtedly elapsed. And he wondered if it was during that period that he had managed to get on board and close the cabin door. Then, as he was burying him, he *knew*; he found out that his would-be murderer had indeed visited the *Pompeia*.

For he was mistaken when he told Barbara earlier that there was nothing else on her brother's body. As he prepared to put the trunk into the hole he had dug for it—while still the fixed open eyes stared up at him, this time in the morning's sunlight, and still the beautifully white teeth gleamed in that light—he observed that, besides the papers which had dropped from his shirt, there were still some others that had remained within the pocket.

And drawing them out he saw that, all soaked as they were like the others, they were the narrative of Nicholas Crafer.

"So," he thought, while he felt faint and sick as he mused—"so he was in the cabin, after all! Heavens! he must have crept in while I slept, have rifled my pockets in the dark when the lamp had

gone out, have—faugh!—had his foul hands all about me! Thank God! he must have come when the light had burnt out, otherwise he would have seen the pistol.”

He never knew that the ruffian had, in truth, known the pistol was there, but had forgotten, or feared to use, it when in the cabin later on.

He tossed the remains into the hole he had dug, touching them with the greatest disgust and loathing, and then covered the spot up hurriedly and stamped the earth down over it, and took his way back to Barbara. And, as he went, he determined that he would not tell her of this further instance of villainy on her brother's part. Henceforth she should learn no more of the workings of that wicked heart and brain.

When he reached the hut he saw her on the verandah, seated in the usual chair and with tears in her eyes. The papers he had given her were stretched out on a table before her, and, as he mounted the steps, she held out one to him and bade him read it. A glance showed that it was a will made by her father, a will properly drawn up and attested at some lawyer's office in Tortola; a will by which everything was left to her, including the island and the treasure if ever found—indeed, all that he possessed.

“Because,” he read, in the cramped legal hand of the person who had drawn it out, “of the cruelty, the greed and the evil temper of my son to me, as well as his ill-treatment of me and my dear daughter, Barbara, I give and bequeath to her all and everything of which I may die possessed, including Coffin Island,

any buried treasure that may chance to be found," etc., etc., etc.

"Great heavens!" Reginald thought to himself, as he handed her back the will, "there was no end to the scoundrel's wickedness. How could this villain be Barbara's brother!"

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE APPROACHING SEARCH

REGINALD found Joseph Alderly's boat on the same evening, when he was out on a tour about the coast of the island on the look-out for it. As he suspected, Alderly had brought it round to the neighbourhood of the river's mouth, preferring to get at him that way instead of by the path down from his house. His reasons for doing so might have been manifold, the young man knew very well—reasons that would, doubtless, at once occur to such a scheming brain as that of the dead ruffian. For, independently of the fact that he would have strongly wished to avoid any encounter with him on shore—and, for aught he knew, Reginald might be ashore at any period of the night—he might have brought his cutter to that neighbourhood so as to be able to get away from the island at once, after the sinking of the *Pompeia* had been accomplished.

For instance, had his plan succeeded he could have sailed to Anegada or Tortola within two or three hours from the time of the crime being committed, and, arriving at either place in the night, could have very easily induced the belief that he had anchored much earlier than he had actually done. In those spots very little, if any, notice is taken after dark of what boats are about—especially such boats as Alderly's, which are common

all over the islands—and his *alibi* would consequently have held good when Reginald was reported missing. And even the report of his being missing would not have spread abroad for probably some time after the event. None but tourists came to Coffin Island, and Barbara would have been unable to get away from it; while, since the *Pompeia* would have disappeared for ever from human eyes, no one could have absolutely said that her temporary owner was dead. He might just as well have gone off with her to some other island as she have sunk to the bottom of the river, and Alderly could, therefore, have returned without his sister being able to advance one proof that Reginald Crafer had been made away with.

“Though,” said Reginald to himself, as he mused over the matter while he inspected Alderly’s own boat, “if I had been drowned after she heard the pistol shots, she would certainly have thought I had died trying to defend myself. And, had her scoundrelly brother managed to survive me, Barbara would, if I mistake not, have taxed him very plainly with my death.”

He found the cutter anchored in about three fathoms of water, and had to get out to her in such a crazy, water-logged punt—in which Alderly must himself have come ashore—that he feared every moment the thing would sink under his weight, and expose him to the chance of a similar fate to that which had overtaken its owner. However, it was sounder than it looked, and, on inspecting the larger craft, he came to the conclusion that she would be navigable across to Tortola if she escaped bad weather—of which there

were no signs now. The dead man had managed to patch her up in a manner very creditable to his knowledge of seacraft, and to set right the injuries she had received when cast ashore; so that, as far as the journey over to the Commissioner was concerned, he might start at once.

"Though," he pondered, as he inspected the cutter and found nothing inside her beyond her ordinary gear but a bottle of rum, some meat and coarse bread, and a pipe—"though there is no reason why I should hurry myself. We had better begin to dig up the treasure now, I think, and, meanwhile, this dog's hole of a boat will serve for my habitation as well as the poor *Pompeia*, though it's not quite so sweet and wholesome."

Whereon he hauled up her anchor, got her round to the river, and moored her as near as possible over the spot where the sunken yacht lay.

"I may have to pay Juby a good deal for her," he mused, as he went up the path to Barbara's house. "However, we ought to find the wherewithal on the Key to do so. I suppose she will give me enough to do that." And he laughed to himself as the thought passed through his mind.

Barbara was eating her evening meal when he reached the hut, and he sat down to share it with her, telling her that henceforth she would have to keep him in food as long as they were together.

"I had loaded the *Pompeia* up with all sorts of good things such as are to be procured in the islands and at their stores," he said, trying to be gay and also to brighten her up, "but I might have saved myself

the trouble. They are at the bottom of the river, and there they will stay until they are rotten. So, Barbara, I must live on you."

She gave him one swift glance from the sweet hazel eyes under the straight black eyebrows—eyes whose lids were red now from long weeping—and he understood it well enough. He knew that she would give him everything she possessed in the world, including her very life, as well as the fortune that was now to be hers—if old Nicholas had made no mistake, and if no one had ever lighted on the Key and its contents between the time of his departure and the coming of the other Barbara.

"By-the-bye," he said, as they ate their supper side by side, and Barbara tried to put such choice morsels of her poor plain food as there were on his plate, which attention he managed sometimes to avoid—"by-the-bye, we don't know after all what we are really going to discover. Nicholas managed to lose one of the most important parts of his manuscript, the list, as he calls it, of part of what he found. It is a good thing he didn't mislay the description of the Key and the measurements as well. If he had done that we should have been in a fix."

"But," said Barbara, "he has said what is in the long box. We know that, at any rate. Surely that's a fortune in itself?"

"What! six thousand pounds! Why, Barbara, when you go out into the world, the real world, London, the Continent, swagger German and Swiss places in the summer, and Rome and the Riviera in the winter, you'll find what a little bit of money six

thousand pounds make. No ! Nick's fifty thousand 'guineas' must be found for you before you become anything like a swell heiress with a romantic history, run after by all the men for your beauty and your wealth."

"Don't—don't talk like that !" the girl said. "It pains me to hear you joking like that. I know nothing of the places you mention, and as to men running after me—oh, don't, don't ! And besides, you have forgotten—it is not mine."

"Every penny of it !" exclaimed Reginald, "except what Mr. Juby wants for the yacht if uninsured."

"No ! no ! no !" she said. "Remember, it is not in the island—my island, I suppose, now. The Keys are as much yours, or anyone else's, as mine. And if it had been on the island, and we had dug it up, I would not have taken it. If you would not have shared it with me—I—I—well, I would have thrown it into the sea."

"What a nice ending to poor old Nick's troubles and labours here in finding it, and at home in writing his long account in that queer fist of his ! And also to all that your people have gone through, from your namesake downwards. No, no, Barbara ! We won't throw it back into the sea, at any rate. And to-morrow we'll dig it up. Shall we ?"

This was agreed upon, and then Reginald prepared to leave her. He offered to stay in the house if she felt nervous—as she had once before implored him to do ; but now she said, "No, she was not nervous. She feared nothing now. There was no one else who could come to harm him or her ; the island was theirs

and theirs alone." He noticed that she called it "theirs" and not "hers," but made no remark on the subject, since an idea had arisen in his mind : he knew now what the future of the treasure, of Barbara, and of himself must be!—and he proceeded to arrange for their movements on the morrow.

"It will be low water two hours after daybreak," he said, "and by that time I will have brought the cutter and the boat round to the strip of beach nearest to the Keys. You might meet me there, Barbara, and bring some food and fresh water, and then we will begin. Meanwhile, let me have whatever tools and implements you possess for digging. I will take them with me and bring them in the cutter in the morning."

In the shed behind the hut they found what was required, an old spade and a nearly new one, a pickaxe and some ropes—for the Alderlys, father and son, had had to attend to their garden in this tropical island almost as much as though they had lived in Europe—and these would be enough, he thought.

So, shouldering them, he bade her "Good-night"—it seemed to each as though their hands were clasped together longer and more tightly now than they had ever been before!—and went his way down to the river once more.

It would have been strange if, to-night—the night before the story, that his ancestor had written in those long past and forgotten years, was to be realised—he should not have had a host of thoughts whirling through his brain ; if past and present had not been

strangely confused and jumbled up together in that brain.

There lay the cutter, a dark indistinct mass, in the midst of the stars reflected from above; in the very self-same spot where so many other small vessels, all connected with him, with Barbara, and with the treasure, had lain before. Itself the property of a villain whose villainy was inherited through centuries, it occupied the spot in that little river where once the *Etoyle* had been moored, where she had been sunk, and where Simon Alderly and his murdered victim, the diver, had got ashore. Also there, or close by, had been the galliot of honest Nicholas with its dying and dead crew, and with Nicholas sleeping, or trying to sleep, in that place of death, or watching Alderly in his murderous madness as he slew his companion. And he pictured to himself the sloop with the unknown Martin having probably been anchored there before those days—doubtless as full of reckless, blood-stained scoundrels as was the *Etoyle* herself; he remembered how, not twenty-four hours before, the graceful and pretty *Pompeia* had ridden at anchor on the river's bosom—and now she, too, had gone to join the other wrecks below the water.

He shuddered as these thoughts passed through his mind; shuddered at all that the treasure had led to in the way of murder and death.

"It was here, here where I stand," he whispered to himself, "that the diver was slain; there, in the river, that the bones of the pirates lie, and also those of the crew of the galliot; above—where she, the pure outcome of so much evil, dwells—

that Simon Alderly died mad and without time to repent."

A slant of the rising moon gleamed through the wood on to the bank and played on the waters of the river lower down; the ray was thrown upon the very spot where, last night, he had seen the staring eyes and the glistening teeth of Joseph Alderly, as the limbless body swirled round with the stream—and he started and shivered.

"Heavens!" he exclaimed, "it is a charnel-house, a place of horror! I—I cannot sleep in that boat to-night."

He turned from the accursed spot—all beautiful as it was now beneath the rising moon, and illuminated with myriads of fireflies, while over and above all was the luscious perfume of tropical plants and flowers—and went his way through the thick underbrush to a part of the shore beyond the spot where the body of Joseph Alderly had been buried, avoiding that place as he proceeded. Then, when he had gone some distance, he chose a bit of the beach high and dry above the line of the already receding sea, and, laying himself down upon it, gazed far over the waters to where a few lights sparkled at intervals from the little island of Tortola.

But ere he slept, and when a deep sense of fatigue was stealing over him, he rose once more, and, kneeling down by the spot he had selected, he prayed long that, whatever the morrow might bring forth, at least one thing might be granted. He prayed that all the bloodshed, and the cruelty that that treasure had been the cause of for more than two centuries, had ended

at last, never more to be renewed—he prayed that, henceforth, it might bring only happiness and peace in its train.

“For her, for her,” he whispered. “For her and for me.”

And, feeling sure that his prayer was heard and would be granted, he laid himself down again and soon was sleeping peacefully.

CHAPTER XL.

THE SEARCH.

As the dawn came, and a cool wind blew over the water and brushed his cheek, he arose from a night of refreshing slumber—the first for two days—and took his way back to the cutter. Then, reaching her, he soon unmoored, made the boat fast astern, and, getting down the river, sailed round the island to the spot where the Keys were.

It took him an hour to fetch the beach in two tacks, and then he saw that, early as he was, Barbara was there before him, and that she was seated on the shore, the dog at her feet and a basket by her side.

This morning her eyes were no longer red—she had done with weeping for her vile brother, he thought—and her colour, always beautiful, except since the events of the last few days had driven it all away, had now come back to her. She, too, he knew, had slept peacefully at last, and in that peaceful rest all her loveliness had returned.

“Now, Barbara,” he said, after they had exchanged their morning greetings, he from the boat, and she from the shore, “we’ll call the boat away, and off we go to your inheritance. In a few hours you will, I trust, be put in possession of it.” Saying which, he anchored the cutter, got into the boat and cast her off, and so rowed ashore for Barbara. He had found out

that the capabilities of this boat—crazy as it seemed—were quite equal to carrying them, and the implements for digging, out to the Key a hundred yards off, and he also knew that, by leaving Barbara on the middle Key when they had found the treasure, he could convey each of the boxes, or coffers, back to the island one by one. Then, as to the final removal of them and their owner from Coffin Island—well, that would all be arranged for later.

A few minutes only and they stepped out upon the soft wet sand of the middle Key—they stood upon the place that, perhaps, no other foot had trodden since Nicholas left it more than two hundred years ago. There was nothing to bring anyone to that particular atom of an island among all the thousands upon thousands of islands with which the marine surface of the world is dotted, not even a search for the turtles and the eggs they laid. For, in these regions, those creatures are so common that nobody desiring to procure one would have even troubled to visit the middle Key while the outer ones were easier of access.

“I begin to feel very nervous now we have reached here, and the search is about to begin,” Barbara said. “Oh! what shall we find—or shall we find anything?”

“Make your mind easy,” Reginald replied, although he himself felt unaccountably excited, too, at what was before them. “The story left by Nicholas bears the stamp of truth on every line of it; I would stake my existence on his having buried the boxes as he wrote. And as to their having been disinterred,

why! there is no possibility of that. Come, let us begin."

He looked round at the sea as he spoke, and scanned the little crisping waves as they rolled on to the Key's shore, and, involuntarily and sailor-like, searched the horizon to see if there was any sail in sight, any likelihood of their being observed. Yet, as he knew and told the girl by his side, there was no chance of that.

"On this, the east side of the Key," he said, "there is nothing nearer than the Cape de Verd Islands and the African coast, and nothing passes east or west within twenty miles of this place. We will make a beginning."

Then they sat down on the brushwood of the island, disturbing as they did so a great two-hundred-pound turtle that crawled gasping away, and Reginald, taking out the now water-stained and blurred pages of Nicholas, began to read over carefully his measurements and instructions for finding the exact spot where the buried treasure lay.

"From the north side of the middle Key is fifty-one good strides of three feet each," he repeated from the paper; "'from the south side is fifty-three, from the east is forty-nine, from the west is fifty strides and a half.' Barbara, let us measure. I will begin from this, the south side."

Very carefully he paced out the strides, "good ones," as his predecessor had directed, only, instead of sticking in the ground a sword—which, of course, he did not possess here—he put a large white stone. Then, as Nicholas had himself done, three times did he go over the ground, making all the strides

correspond with the ancient manuscript; and at last he said to Barbara, "Now we will dig."

"It is only three feet from the surface to the topmost turtle shell," he remarked, as he took off his light jacket and rolled up his sleeves. "Ten minutes will show if we have hit it right."

At the end of those ten minutes he found that, though he had made a mismeasurement of a foot and a half from the east to west, he had otherwise judged his distance with sufficient accuracy. The treasure, certainly the topmost turtle shell, was there. The spade struck against the edge of that shell instead of the exact middle of it; in a few minutes more, by digging the sand up further to the west, the whole of it was exposed, its convex side rising towards them.

"We have found it," he exclaimed. "We have found it, Barbara! The treasure is—yours!"

* * * * *

What was in the oblong box has been told by Nicholas himself, therefore it is not necessary to write down an account of its contents again. Roughly, too, he has told what he found in the first two "coffers" or chests, including the "grinning skull," which they, of course, found also. But Nicholas's list had been lost, therefore one somewhat more full shall now be given, leaving his account of the first strong box to speak for itself. And also in the second, "the Spanish pieces of eight, the Portyguese crusadoes, English crowns, and many more French coins as well as hundreds of gold pieces of our kings and queens away back to Elizabeth," were all there as he has described,

so neither need they be again set down. It was when they came to the third coffer that their curiosity was the most aroused, for with it began their search for something he had left no account of, something that was described in that "list" which was missing. Therefore, they opened it with almost trembling hands—when it had been brought up to the surface—wondering what they should find.

On the top lay a deerskin, dressed and trimmed, showing that whenever it might originally have been put in, it had at least belonged to people who had some of the accessories of civilisation about them, since, had it belonged to wild and savage persons, it would have been hardly dressed at all, nor would it have possessed any trimming at the edges. This they lifted off, only to come to a variety of smaller skins, such as those of fox, goat, and sheep, which it was easy to perceive were simply used as wrappers to large substances within them.

"These coverings," said Reginald, as he unwrapped one, "seem to point to England, or at least Europe, as the spot whence they came; well, let us—ah!"

There rolled from out the one he was at that moment unwinding a beaker a foot high, of a dull copper colour, much embossed with leaves and flowers. Yet, dull as it was, even their slight knowledge was enough to tell them it was gold. Also its shape was antique enough to show that it was no new piece of workmanship, even when Simon Alderly had found it—if he did find it, as seemed most likely; its long, thin lip, thin neck, and big body proclaimed it of the middle ages at least.

"So," said Reginald, giving it a rub with some of the sand by his side, under which the dim coppery hue turned to a more golden yellow, "this is Number Three. If the other box is full of such gold ornaments the find will be worth having."

In this box itself there were no more gold beakers, only, instead, it was full of silver plate of all kinds, and all enveloped in skins. There were also two more beakers, but in silver, many cups and chalices, some with covers to them and some without, several silver ewers, a long vase all neck and spout, some extremely ancient candelabras, and a woman's silver dagger, known in old days as a wedding knife.

"Oh!" said Barbara, appalled at the sight of objects so unfamiliar to her, who had never drunk out of aught but calabashes, gourds, and cheap earthenware—"Oh! it seems a sin to dig all these beautiful things up."

"A greater one to let them lie in the earth," said Reginald with a laugh. "Come, let's go on to Number Four and see what he has got inside him."

"Now, Barbara," Reginald said next, as they began on Number Four. "Shut your eyes until I tell you to open them."

The girl obeyed—indeed, all through this treasure hunt, or, as it had now become, treasure inspection, they were more like a boy and girl playing with new toys than a grown man and a young woman just about to leave her teens behind her—and, when he told her to open them, she saw that he had come upon a number of little plump bags tied at the neck. These bags were made of a coarse kind of linen cloth, or

Russia duck, and were much discoloured ; yet, rough as they were, they did not prevent the impression of coins being seen inside.

“Here we come to the money—let’s hope it’s not copper!” exclaimed Reginald.

Again, when they opened the first bag and poured out the contents into Barbara’s lap, it looked as though they had found copper ; but again, as before, what seemed copper was in reality gold. But the pieces which they saw were such as they had never seen the like of before, such as they never were able to guess the name of until some time afterwards, when more experienced numismatists than this young sailor and the girl by his side had the handling of them. What they absolutely found was : First, a bag full of Elizabeth “soveraines,” valued in her time at 30s. each, it containing two hundred and six of these pieces. Then there was a bag full of angels of the same reign, valued at 12s. each, of angelets at 6s., and of quarter angels at 3s., there being of these smaller coins three hundred and eleven in the little sack. The third bag they opened—a larger one—contained fifty gold crowns of Henry VIII.’s reign, fifty gold half-crowns of Elizabeth’s—the former having the figure of the king on horseback—and in it, also, were one hundred and thirty rose nobles, eighty-five double-rose nobles, eighty-three double-rose rials, or reals, each of the value of 30s., and two double gold crowns, these two being the largest and most valuable of any of the coins they found.

“We are getting on, Barbara ; we shall have a nice stock to take back to the hut,” Reginald said, as he

tied the bags up again exactly as before. "However, let's continue. This box is a monster and contains the most of all."

Whoever had put together all this treasure of money—as well as what was to come—was, it is certain, a methodical person; for, with the exception of the above coins of Henry VIII. being mixed with those of his daughter (there was not one of her sister, Mary's reign), the different monarchs had been kept separate and distinct from one another. This was shown by the next three bags, two of which contained gold coins of James I.'s reign, but of no other English king. Of these, the first had in it two hundred and one spur-rials of the value of 15s. each—these coins being so called from the rays, issuing out of the sun upon them, resembling the rowels of spurs—one hundred and three of the single rose rials, and four single crowns. The second bag had exactly one hundred single crowns by themselves; the third had two hundred and two small gold pieces, French ones, they being crowns of the sun as originally coined by Louis XI., and valued in England in Elizabeth's time at 7s. each.

"Well, Barbara," Reginald said, as they finished these bags, "what do you think of your fortune as far as it has gone? After we have had some food we will go on and see what more there is."

"I think," the girl replied, as she opened her basket and took from it some bread, eggs, a piece of cold roasted goat's flesh, and some of the fruit which grew in such profusion on Coffin Island—"I think as I have always thought, namely, that it is not my fortune but yours, and that——"

“Ah!” interrupted Reginald. “Well! we won’t quarrel over that now. So I’ll put my question in a different way. What do you think of *the* fortune as far as it has gone?”

“I think it is a shame to dig it up. It seems like digging up the poor dead creatures who put it first in the vault—who wrapped it all up so carefully, and tied the money up in bags as if they felt sure the day would come when they, or those dear to them, would inherit it all. And think of what strangers it has come to, not only now but before! Simon Alderly had no real right to it, neither had Nicholas Crafer, nor have you nor I.”

“You or I—you, of course—mean to keep it, though, Barbara. It has been ours for two hundred years: yours by the first discovery—namely, by the respected Simon: mine by the second—namely, the worthy Nicholas; and, in spite of any silly old laws about treasure trove, why, finding’s keepings. Besides, the treasure trove was two hundred years ago. Our ancestors are responsible for that part of it. We, on the contrary, can show a two centuries’ title—that’s good enough for all the lawyers in the world, I fancy.”

With jokes and *badinage* such as this the young man passed the luncheon, dinner, or meal-hour—whichever it should be called—away. Indeed, at this time, when the long-buried wealth of the past was being at last revealed to its ultimate heirs and possessors, he was anxious above all things to keep off the discussion of whose it was, and who was to have it and who was not. As has been suggested a little earlier, *he* saw, *he* knew—or felt almost positive

that he saw and knew—what was the final disposition of all that the Key was now disgorging, only—the present was not the time to speak about that disposition to Barbara. So, as much as possible, he kept to other matters in connection with the task they were now engaged upon.

“Whoever they were,” he went on meditatively, as the simple repast drew to an end, “who originally owned it all, they must almost certainly have been our country people. Although we don’t either of us know what those coins are, we can at least see that they are mostly English, and all about one period, namely, Elizabeth’s and her successor’s, James. Now, let’s see. Charles I. succeeded James, eh, Barbara?”

“Yes,” said the girl. “Yes. At school we thought Charles I. the most interesting of all the English kings.”

“Ah!” said Reginald; “well, I’ve heard other people say differently. Our chaplain in the *Ianthé*, for instance, used to wrangle with the paymaster for hours about him, and call him all kinds of names. However, let’s put two and two together. Charles’s was an uncomfortable sort of reign, for others besides himself, and all sorts of rumpusses were going on—people flying from England to America, *et cetera*. I wonder if the gentleman who owned all these things was one of those? He might be, you know, and have got drifted down here after making bad weather of it in the Atlantic; or the pirates—hem!—of *his own* day, Barbara—no allusions meant to respected ancestors!—might have seized on him—or—or—half a dozen things. I don’t suppose we ever shall find out.”

“No,” she said, “I don’t suppose we shall. Perhaps it’s better that we never should. It might interfere with *your* enjoyment of it all.”

Whereon Reginald laughed once more, while a beautiful but tell-tale blush came to the girl’s face—possibly it had dawned on her, too, by now, how the ultimate possession of the treasure might be arranged!—and then they proceeded to inspect what remained.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE END.

WHAT did remain in this big chest was now to be examined, and they observed that the same precautions had been taken in the way of coverings and wrappings as with all the previous finds.

"Which," said Reginald, descanting thereon as he unwound the wrappers, "shows one thing, if no more. It testifies that all the spoil belonged to the same individual, or individuals. But who was he, Barbara, who was she, or who were they? That's what I want to know."

It was, however, what neither he nor Barbara nor anyone else were ever to know—the treasure hidden centuries ago was, indeed, found, but all knowledge of who or what they were who had so hidden it away was lost for ever. The treasure of those forgotten ones remained to come to these young people at last, but all history, record, and memory of the owners had vanished entirely from the world.

"What's this?" exclaimed Reginald, unwinding a roll as they continued their inspection—"what's this?" while, as he spoke, there was revealed to him a band of metal that looked as though it was a portion of some circular object. It was, in truth, the front part of an ancient coronet, or crown, having set into it five rubies and a diamond, the gold being in

this case far more yellow and less coppery looking than that of the coins had been. And as Reginald turned the thing about in the glowing light of the Caribbean Sea, the gems sparkled and winked and flashed their many-coloured rays in their eyes, as though they themselves were pleased once more to be free from the darkness in which they had lain so long.

"Swells in their day, no doubt," said the young man, referring to those who had once owned all these valuables, "to have worn such things." And again he exclaimed: "Who on earth could they have been?"

The next things they unrolled were five bars of gold, or rather lumps of gold, since instead of being of the shape and form bars are now, they were in cubes, though one was triangular. "A quarter of a pound weight each, Barbara," the young man said, balancing them on his hand. "A quarter of a pound each, if an ounce. I wonder the Respected One could refrain from carrying all this wealth off to his own particular Barbara, or that old Nicholas didn't try to get it away in the Galliot."

Barbara only smiled—indeed, at this moment, woman as she was, she was trying the effect of the front part of the coronet as a bracelet on her arm, and was turning her wrist about to observe the flashing of the stones—and then Reginald proceeded with his inspection.

"Hullo! what have we got now?" he exclaimed, as he unfolded the next object that came to hand.

What he had got now proved to be a sword-handle, cross-shaped and broken off sharp about an inch below the silver guard-plate. In this handle,

which itself was massive silver, roughly fretted so that a firm grasp might be obtained, were more precious stones, mostly diamonds, but with one or two missing from their sockets or settings.

"Undoubtedly swells," murmured Reginald again, "or else freebooters. Fancy, Barbara, if, after all, the original depositor of these things was a sea-robber or pirate himself! One would imagine he could hardly have got such a collection of things otherwise. Unless, on the other hand, he had been a pawnbroker, called, I believe, in those days a Lombard merchant. What do you think?"

"I am getting tired of finding these things," the girl said, listlessly. "I hope there are not many more."

"We'll soon see."

They had, however, nearly finished their work by now: the remainder of the chest's contents were soon examined. They found, to conclude, a little bag of unset gems—a handful of rubies and diamonds; they found also a gold musk ball, and a little silver casket full of musk, the aroma of which had long since departed, and they also discovered a small iron-bound box full of gold dust. Some drinking cups, very small ones, they likewise found, and some pieces of ivory sawn into slabs, several extremely curious and very unwieldy rings with precious stones in them, a pounce-box in gold, and various pieces of antique lace, black with age.

And this concluded their find.

"Altogether," said Reginald, "I'll bet that Nicholas was not far wrong in his computation of the value of

the things in his own day, and, I expect, even in these times, the contents of the oblong box and the chests won't fall far short of his 'fiftie thousand guineas.' But one thing we ought to keep for luck, Barbara, and never part with—and that's the skull, or 'Death,' as Nick called it. It kept its watch and ward well through all the years."

* * * * *

That evening, as the sun dipped below Porto Rico, they sat once more together, as they had so often sat in the last month, upon the verandah of Barbara's house. Within, in the living-room, were piled the chests and the oblong box, all having been brought from the Key to the shore, and from the shore to the building, by their united efforts. And on Barbara's face there was a look of sadness pitiful to see, and in her eyes the signs that the tears were not far away.

"It seems," she said, speaking very low, "as though with the finding of this treasure my life is finished, even as the quest of my family is finished, too. There is nothing more to be done."

"Is there not, Barbara?" asked Reginald, also speaking low, and with more seriousness in his tone than had been apparent since they had grown such friends and intimates. "Is there not? Is there not a long lifetime before you in which to enjoy your new-found wealth—the wealth that has come to you after two centuries of search for it?"

"Oh!" she exclaimed, springing to her feet and standing before him, "why speak in that way? Why say such things? The wealth is yours, yours only,

and you know it. It was you who brought it to light. It was your ancestor's, who might have taken it away with him for ever had he chosen. And when it was at last found, where was it? Not even on our land, on the property that is mine. What part, what share have I in it?"

"I will tell you, Barbara," he said, rising himself, also, and standing by her, while, if possible, his voice became now more deep and earnest. "I will tell you what part and share is yours. The share not only of all that we have to-day unearthed, but of my life. The share of everything I have in this world, even this treasure, if it is rightly mine. My sweet, I loved you almost from the very first, I loved you beyond all doubt from the time that *he* came back, and I knew that, together, we must protect ourselves from him. Barbara, I love you now, and shall love you all my life until I die. Will you not share that life with me, share all with me for ever?"

His arm stole round her as he spoke and he drew her softly towards him, while, as he did so, her golden head drooped to his shoulder, the soft eyes looked up at him from beneath the dark lashes, and, for the first time, their lips met.

THE END.

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